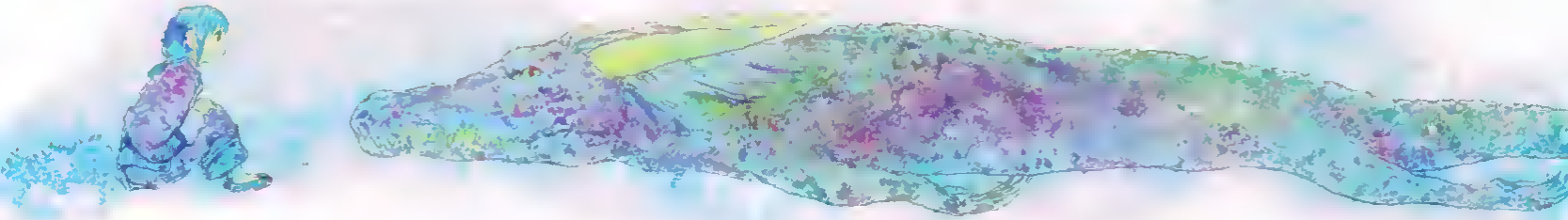
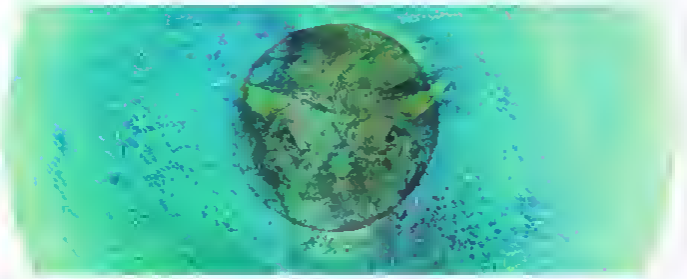
A NEW EPIC FANTASY SERIES FROM
UETAKSHI NAHOKO OF SEIREI NO MORIBITO FAME!!





FROM UEHASHI NAHOKO & TAKEMOTO ITOE,
COMES A NEW GEM OF A FANTASY SERIES!
(Seirei no Moribito)
(Boku to Miraiya no Natsu)
The gears of fate begin
to turn for Eren,
a girl drawn to the
mysterious, ferocious beasts
that terrify and entice mankind.
Dialogue part 1 The Tohda's Mourning Call
The Beast Player
獣の奏者
けもの
そうじゃ
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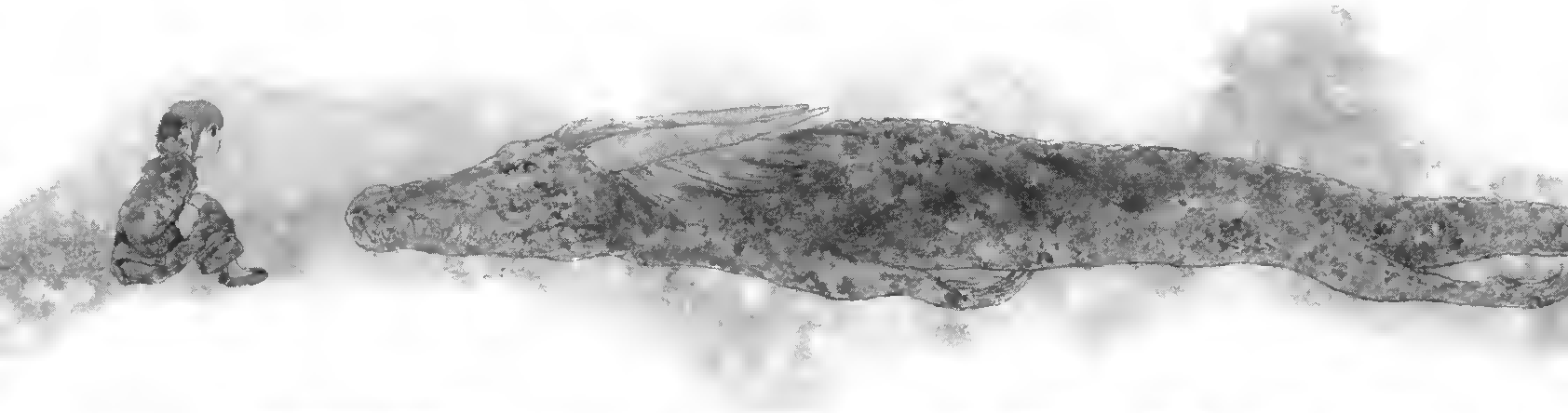
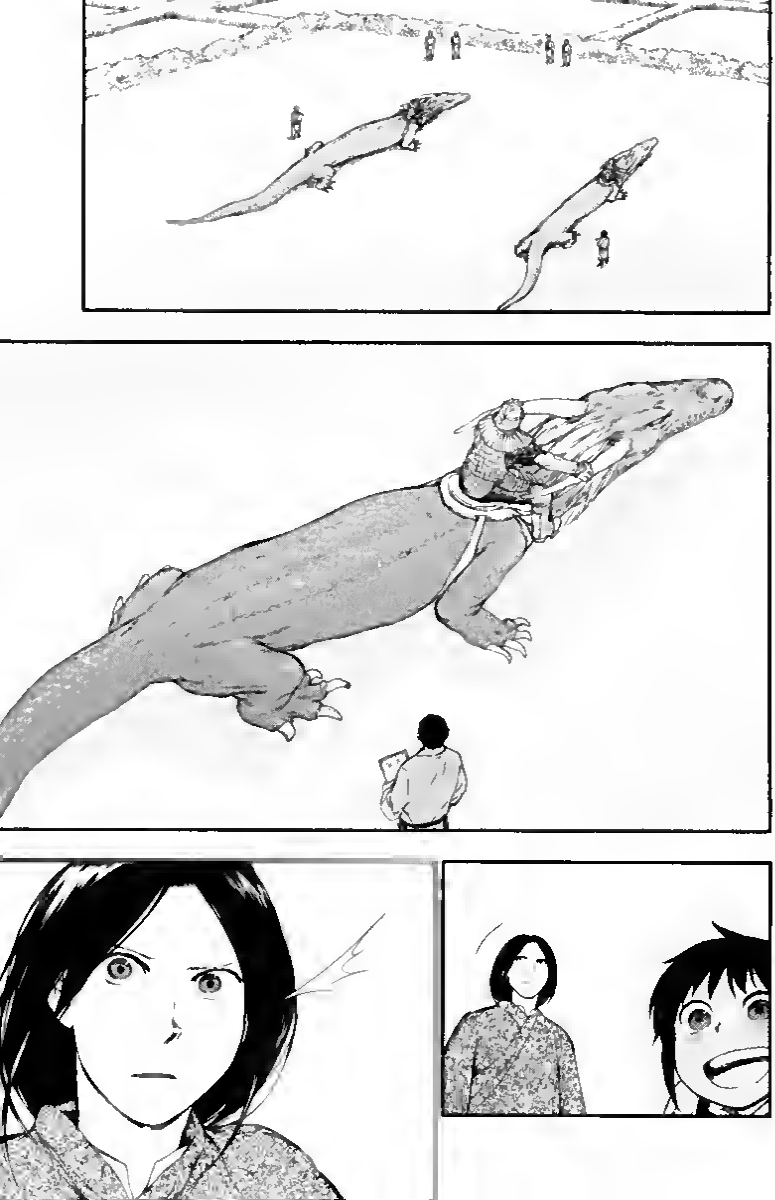


Prologue part 1
The Tohda's Mourning Call

YES, COMING
HURRY UP, MOTHER!
OH?
ERIN, GOING TO SEE THE TOHDA AGAIN?
UH-UHH!
OH, MY, DOES SHE LOOK HAPPY.
WHAT AN AMUSING CHILD
Hurry! Hurry!
TAKE CARE.

*Literally 'fang.' They're the strongest breed of tohda



STAY THERE!
?!
MOTHER?
LEAP
Dash
Dash
Dash
?!
WH-
WHAT'S GOING ON?

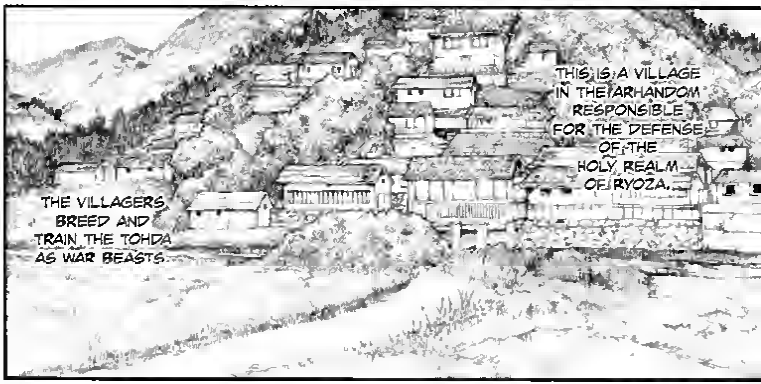
ROAR
WHOA!
!!
Growl

TAIL
ドサ
ドサ

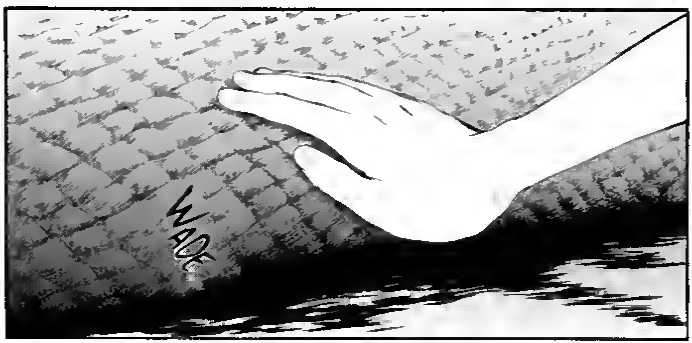
HEY!
IS EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT?
TOO-HAH
...!!
CRRP
I...
I APOLOGIZE!
WHAT IF SOMETHING SERIOUS HAD HAPPENED TO THE KIBA?
IDIOT!
ARE YOU HURT?

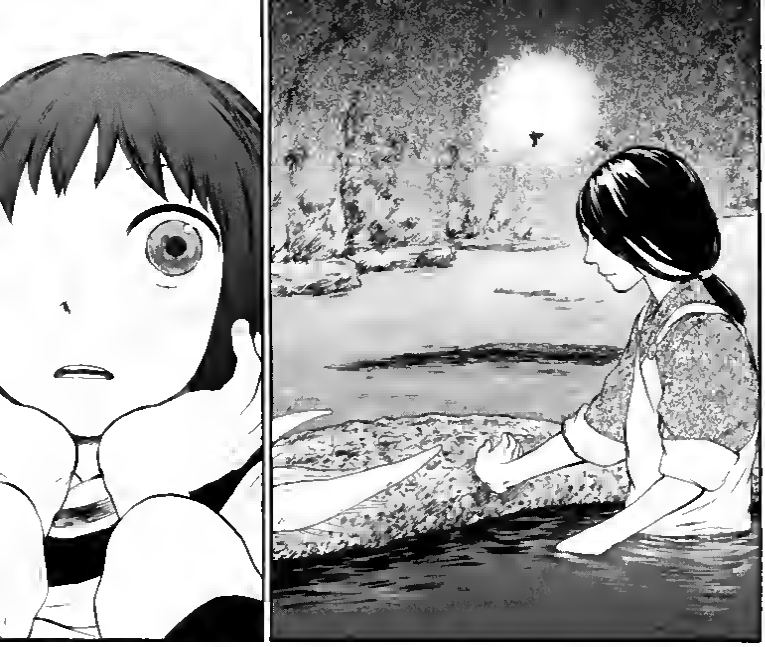
I'M FINE
NO,
...
YES, MADAM
PLEASE, LET IT REST FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE DAY.

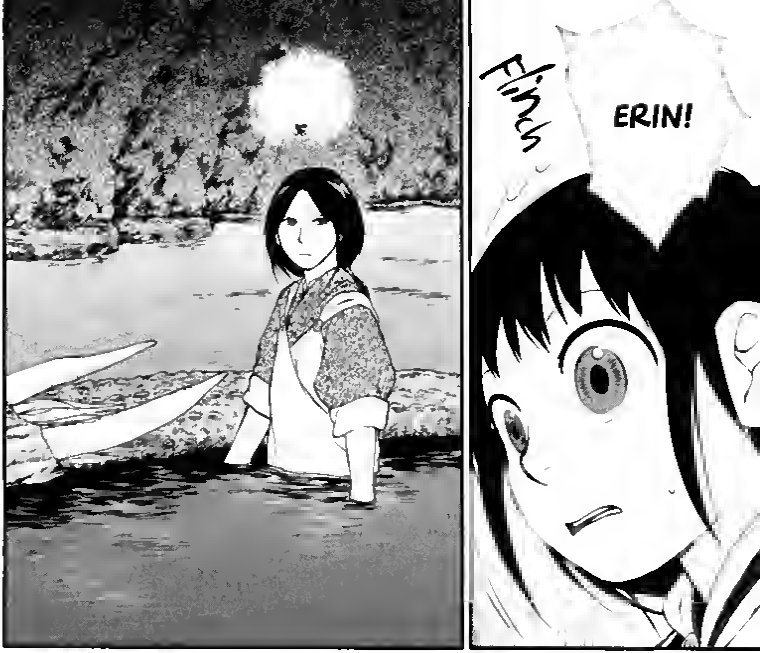
MOTHER!
WHAT HAPPENED TO THAT KIBA?
IS IT ALL RIGHT?
DON'T WORRY

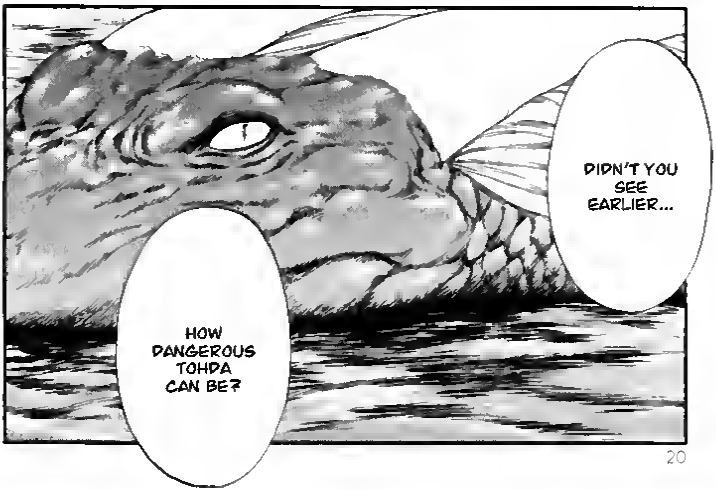

THIS IS A VILLAGE IN THE ARHANDOM* RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE HOLY REALM OF RYOZA.
THE VILLAGERS BREED AND TRAIN THE TOHDA AS WAR BEASTS.

*Arhandom = Grand Duchy





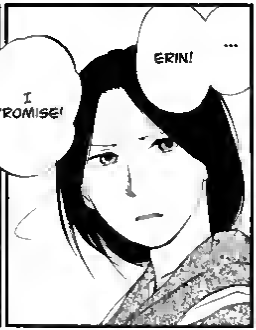

ERIN!
Flinch


DIDN'T YOU SEE EARLIER...
HOW DANGEROUS TOHDA CAN BE?

I'M SORRY.
IF YOU APPROACH ONE WITHOUT BEING PREPARED,
AS SOON AS IT SENSES YOU, IT COULD SWALLOW YOU WHOLE
WHEN THE HERDSMEN AND SOLDIERS NEED TO COME IN CONTACT WITH THEM
WE ARE ONLY SUPPOSED TO USE THIS SOUNDLESS WHISTLE TO NUMB THEIR SENSES
YOU MAY FEEL COMFORTABLE AROUND THEM BECAUSE THEY'RE A FAMILIAR SIGHT TO YOU, BUT...
THEY WILL NEVER BECOME ACCUSTOMED TO MANKIND
THEY ARE CREATURES NOT MEANT TO BE TAMED.

WHEN CAN I TOUCH THEM?
...
THEN...

PLEASE, JUST A TEENY WEENY TOUCH?
I PROMISE I'LL BE CAREFUL, JUST LIKE YOU'VE TOLD ME TO BE!

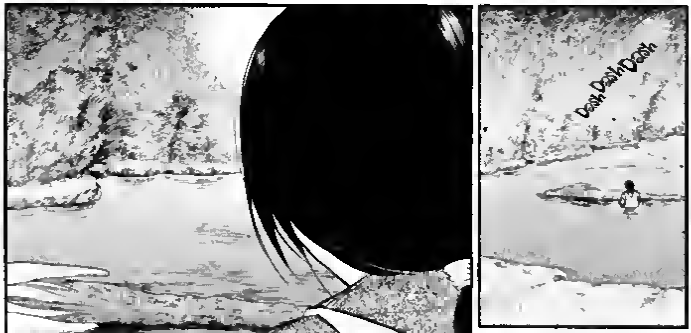

I PROMISE!
ERIN!
...

THOSE SCALES THAT REFLECT LIGHT...
IN SEVEN COLORS...
I'VE ALWAYS WONDERED WHAT THEIR SHINY SCALES WOULD FEEL LIKE.

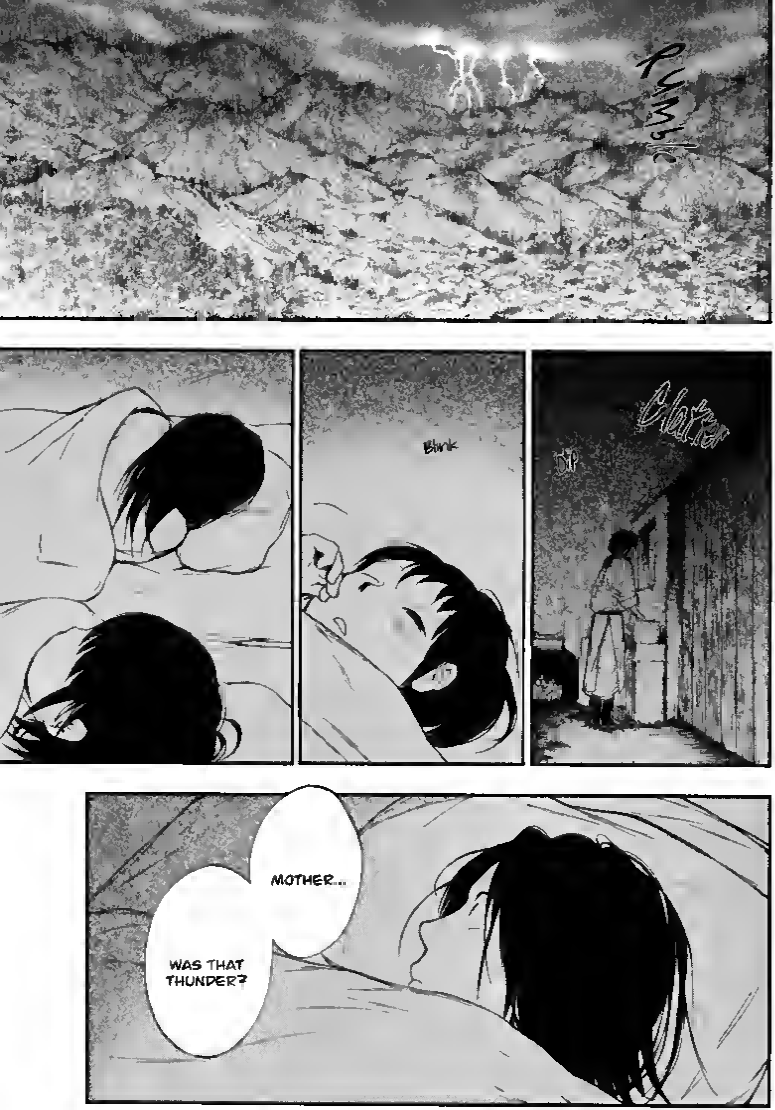
DON'T MAKE ME REPEAT—
CAN I? PLEASE?
...
...
MOTHER?

ONCE YOU'VE GROWN INTO A YOUNG WOMAN...
OF, SAY, FIFTEEN,
IF YOU STILL WANT TO TOUCH THEM THEN...
WE MAY CONSIDER IT.

IT'S TIME YOU WENT HOME.


DashDashDash

Plod...
Plod...
CLUNK
Splish...
Splash
DUMP
GLUG
GLUG


Rumble
Blink
Clatter
MOTHER...
WAS THAT THUNDER?

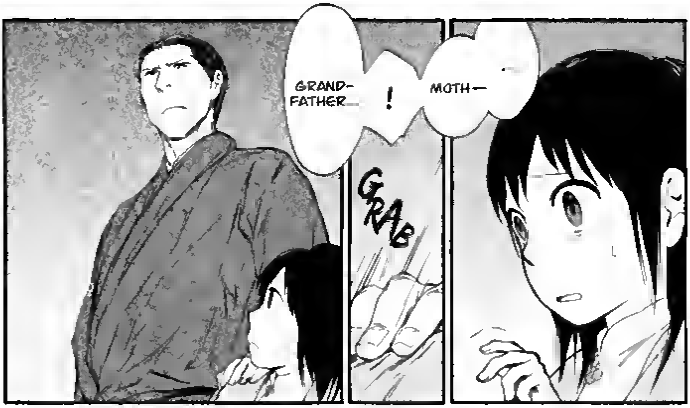
DO THEY SLEEP AT NIGHT, TOO?
SO SWEET... THE SMELL OF THE TOHDA.
Daze
IS FAR AWAY, ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MOUNTAINS THERE'S NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT SO BACK TO SLEEP.
THE STORM...
Mud
Zzz

...!
WHAT—
WHAT'S THIS SOUND?
MOTHER!

BUT, MOTHER—
Tap
STAY HERE.
THAT'S ECHOING IN EVERY DIRECTION
IT SOUNDS LIKE A SHRIEK
THEY'RE HEADED FOR THE EASTERN CLIFFS
HERDSMEN?

I'M SURE THE SOUND IS COMING FROM THE CAVERN
Huff
Huff

THE KIBA!
!
Gasp!
...
?


GRAND-
FATHER
!
MOTH—
GRAB

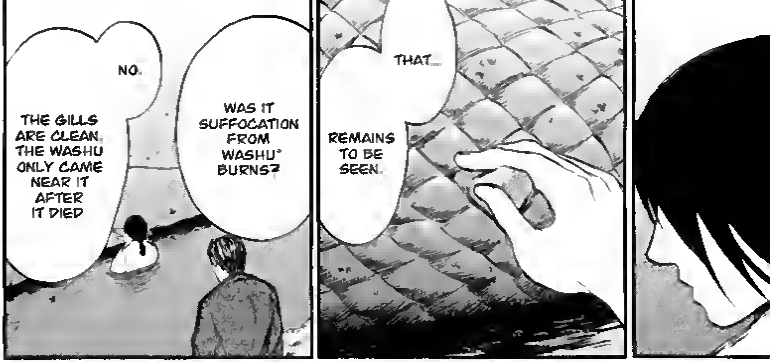
IS IT
DEAD?
...

FIVE HEAD...
IN ALL?
CHIEF!
SLASH
SLASH
SLASH

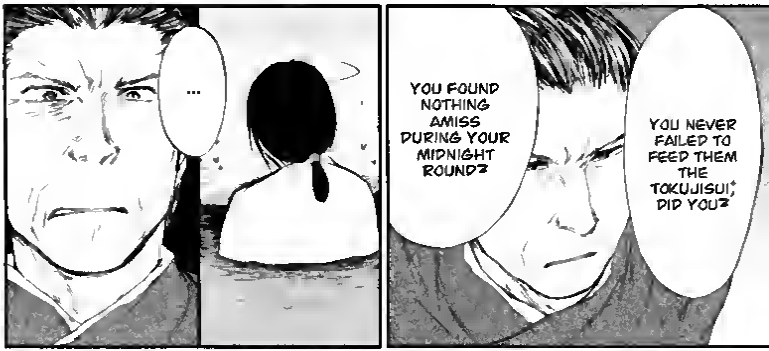
THEY'VE STOPPED THEIR MOURNING, THOUGH THEY'RE STILL THRASHING ABOUT IN THE WATER. OTHER THAN THAT, EVERYTHING IS FINE.
ALL THE DOU* AND THE O** ARE FINE.
WHAT OF THE OTHER TOHDA? ...
Gil
CHATTER
THE KIBA IN THE NEXT GROTTO ARE DEAD, TOO!

*Dou = trunk
**O = jail

IF THE TOHDA KEEP THAT UP, THEY MIGHT HIT THE WALLS AND INJURE THEMSELVES.
GO TO YOUR ASSIGNED GROTTOES, ALL OF YOU!
WE DON'T WANT TO LOSE ANOTHER HEAD!

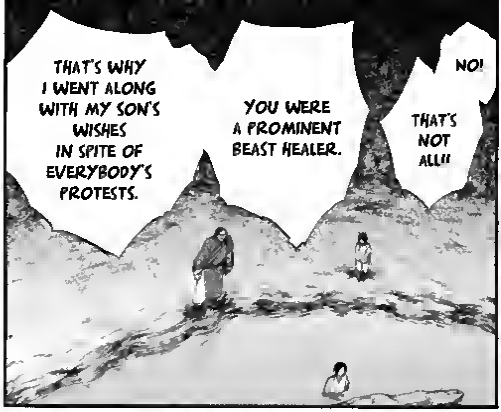

NO.
THE GILLS ARE CLEAN. THE WASHU ONLY CAME NEAR IT AFTER IT DIED
WAS IT SUFFOCATION FROM WASHU* BURNS?
THAT...
REMAINS TO BE SEEN.

*washu = glowing worms



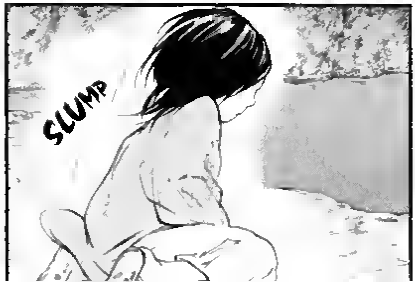

※ Literally: special nourishment water. A solution of herbs given only to kiba

I AM PREPARED.
PREPARED. SOH-YON?!
BEING THE HEAD OF THE HERDSMEN AND YOUR FATHER-IN-LAW.
I WILL NO DOUBT BE THE ONE THEY PUT ON THE SPOT!
I HAVE TO PREPARE MYSELF AS WELL, DON'T I?
THEY WILL ASK ME WHY I LET YOU, AN AHRYO, TAKE CHARGE OF THE ARHAN'S TREASURED KIBA!


THAT'S WHY I WENT ALONG WITH MY SON'S WISHES IN SPITE OF EVERYBODY'S PROTESTS.
YOU WERE A PROMINENT BEAST HEALER.
NO! THAT'S NOT ALL!!

IF IT HADN'T BEEN FOR ASSON'S LAST WORDS...
IF YOU HADN'T BEEN CARRYING HIS CHILD...

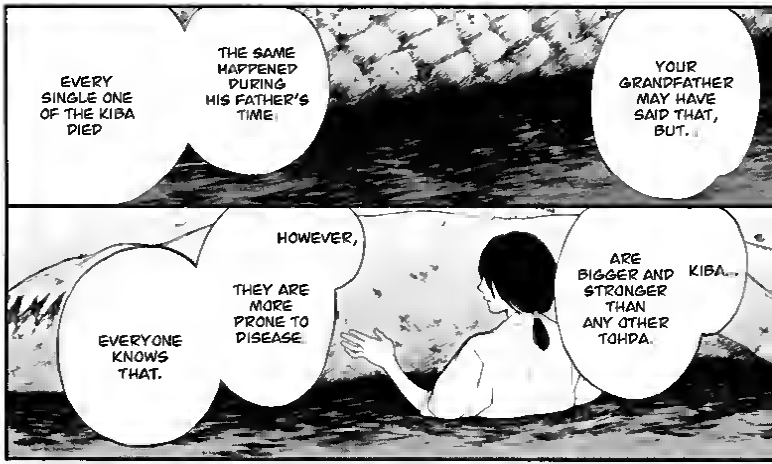
BUT...
TO THINK IT WOULD COME TO THIS!
WHEEZE
WHEEZE


SLUMP

MOTH-
ER...
MOTHER!
FEAR
NOT.

I'LL BE FINE.

HE SAID IT'S A CRIME.
BUT...

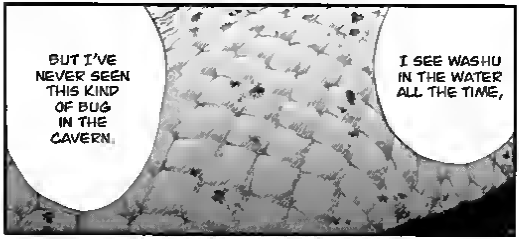

EVERY SINGLE ONE OF THE KIBA DIED
THE SAME HAPPENED DURING HIS FATHER'S TIME.
YOUR GRANDFATHER MAY HAVE SAID THAT, BUT.
EVERYONE KNOWS THAT.
HOWEVER,
THEY ARE MORE PRONE TO DISEASE.
KIBA... ARE BIGGER AND STRONGER THAN ANY OTHER TOHDA.

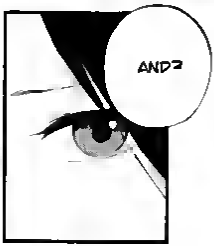
...

...
MOTHER,
DOES A TOHDA'S SMELL CHANGE WHEN IT DIES?
OR..
WHEN IT GETS SICK?
...?

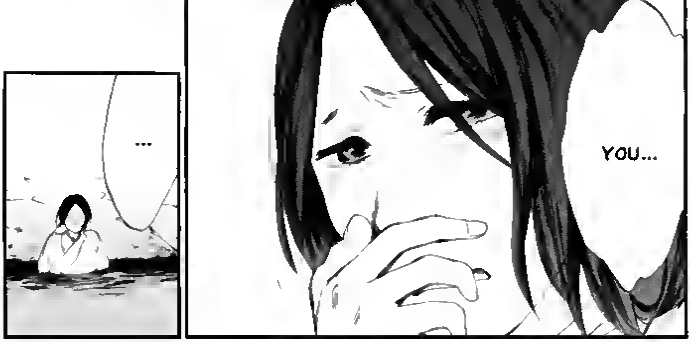
MAYBE THAT'S WHY THOSE STRANGE WINGED BUGS GO NEAR IT.
UM..
WELL..
IT DOESN'T SMELL LIKE IT USUALLY DOES.

WHAT..
MAKES YOU THINK SO?


BUT I'VE NEVER SEEN THIS KIND OF BUG IN THE CAVERN.
I SEE WASHU IN THE WATER ALL THE TIME,


AND?

SO I FIGURED THE TOHDA MUST HAVE SMELLED DIFFERENT AND ATTRACTED THOSE BUGS.
YOU'VE TOLD ME BEFORE, MOTHER.
DIFFERENT BUGS GO TO DIFFERENT FLOWERS BECAUSE OF THE DIFFERENT SMELLS.


...
YOU...

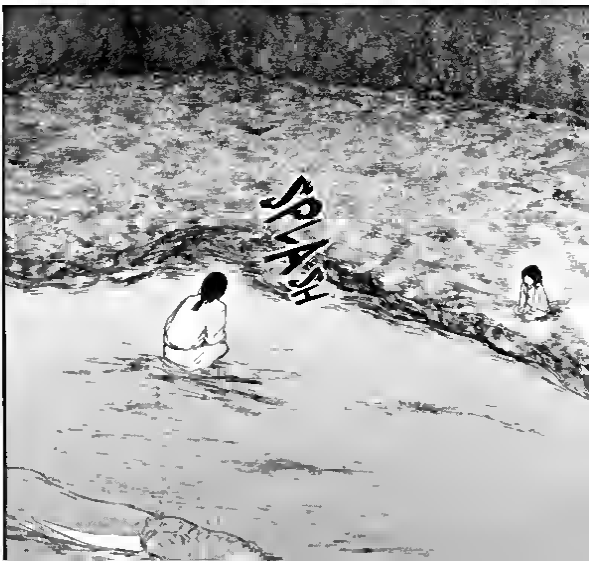
KEEP THAT THOUGHT TO YOURSELF.
ERIN,
DO NOT TELL ANYONE.

...
SOME PEOPLE ARE QUICK TO JUMP TO CONCLUSIONS.
WHY?

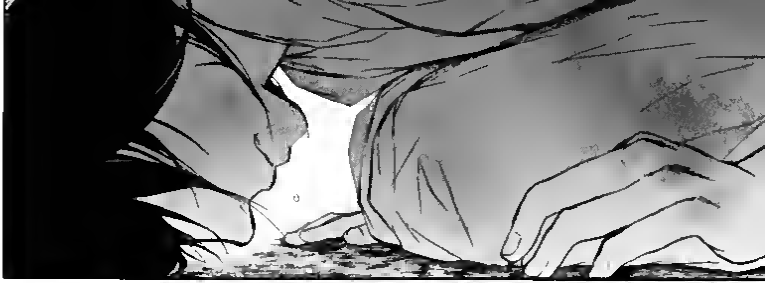
BUT...
I WOULDN'T MIND THAT.
...

AND SCOLD YOU BECAUSE OF IT.
THEY MIGHT THINK IT'S A STORY YOU MADE UP TO SAVE ME.

GASP


SPLASH

THANK YOU.



Kemono no Souja

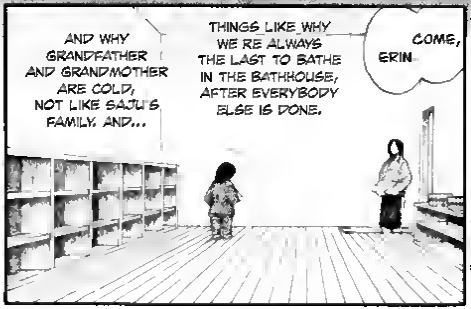
IS AN ATRO-CIOUS CRIME!
LETTING KIBA DIE...
SQUARE
TWITCH
WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO YOU...
MOTHER?

Prologue, part 2

# The Ahryo, People of the Mist

SAJU ONCE SAID TO ME...
?
AHRYO...
..I LET YOU, AN AHRYO, TAKE CHARGE...
...
DO ALL THE AHRYO HAVE GREEN EYES?
SAY...
YOUR EYES ARE GREEN JUST LIKE YOUR MOTHER'S.
ERIN,

ARE YOU POSSESSED?
THEY CALL THE KIDS AKUN-MEH-CHAI
AND
DO YOU ACTUALLY HAVE MAGIC POWERS?
THEY SAY IT'S NOT COMMON FOR VILLAGERS AND THE AHRYO TO HAVE KIDS TOGETHER


AND WHY GRANDFATHER AND GRANDMOTHER ARE COLD, NOT LIKE SAJU'S FAMILY. AND...
THINGS LIKE WHY WE RE ALWAYS THE LAST TO BATHE IN THE BATHHOUSE, AFTER EVERYBODY ELSE IS DONE.
COME, ERIN

I'VE ALWAYS. . WONDERED ABOUT CERTAIN THINGS.

...
WHISPER
WHISPER

STANDS OUT FROM THE REST OF THE VILLAGERS
...HOW MOTHER
SHE'S TALLER THAN ANYBODY IN THE VILLAGE.
HER FACIAL FEATURES AND THE COLOR OF HER EYES ARE UNIQUE, TOO.
WHEN DID I START NOTICING?
ARE YOU AN AHRYO, MOTHER?
AM I AN AKUN-MEH-CHAI?
IS THAT WHY THEY ARE ACCUSING YOU?

...
YOU MUST BE TIRED.
Squeeze
YES.
LET'S HAVE A HEARTY MEAL.
TO PREPARE US FOR TOMORROW.
HUH?
SHALL WE HAVE WILD PORK...
FOR SUPPER TONIGHT?
ARE WE
ARE WE REALLY HAVING WILD PORK FOR SUPPER?
EVEN THOUGH WE'RE NOT CELE-BRATING ANYTHING?
SIZZLE
SIZZLE

Crackle
Crackle
ARE YOU HUNGRY?
SUPPER IS COMING ALONG
FISH
FISH
?
BLAZE

MOTHER?!
FORGIVE ME.
...

IT MUST SEEM TO YOU...
THAT I DID A TERRIBLE THING.
?
BUT...
TO BE...
PERFECT-LY HONEST,
I AM RELIEVED THAT I NO LONGER...
HAVE THE WHISTLE.
?!
HUH?
WH-WHY?
I...
HATED USING IT.

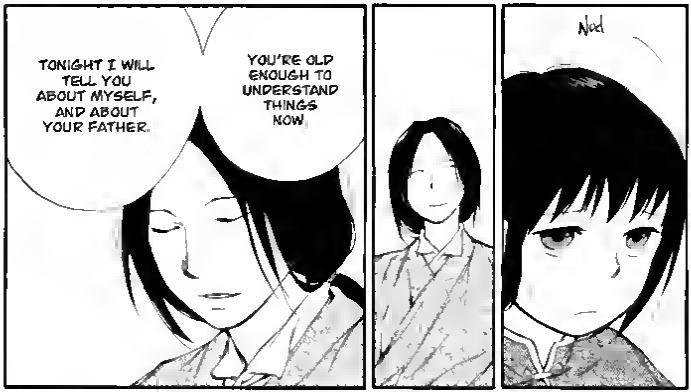
I HATED SEEING TOHDA GO RIGID... WHENEVER I BLEW THE WHISTLE
IT WAS A PITIFUL SIGHT— BEASTS AT THE COMPLETE MERCY OF MEN... WHEN IN THE WILD, THE CHOICE TO LIVE OR TO DIE WAS THEIR OWN.
SEEING THEM GROW WEAKER BEFORE MY VERY EYES... WAS UN-FEAR-ABLE
THEY GET WEAKER IF PEOPLE KEEP THEM? GIVING THEM TOKUJISUI DOESN'T MAKE THEM ANY STRONGER?
TOKUJISUI GIVES THEM STRONGER FANGS*... AND A BIGGER FRAME THAN THEIR WILD COUNTERPARTS
BUT... IT ALSO MAKES THEM VULNERABLE IN SOME WAYS.
*Or teeth.

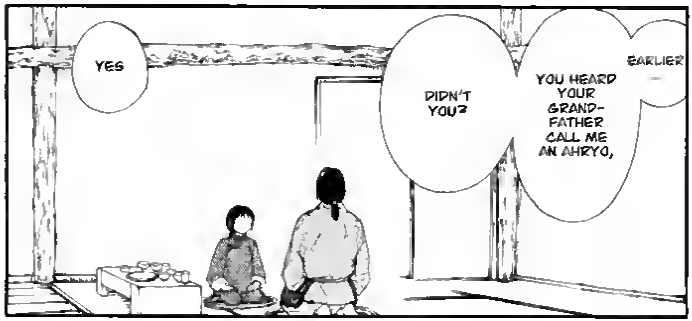
SWEAR TO ME YOU WON'T TELL A SOUL
IT ISN'T COMMON KNOWLEDGE AMONG HERDSMEN.
FORGET
WHAT I JUST SAID
IN WHAT WAYS?
...
HOW ARE THEY VULNERABLE?
I SWEAR I WON'T TELL ME, MOTHER.
YOU WILL FIND THE ANSWER.
I KNOW...
Flip
BUT CANNOT BE DONE BY TOHDA KEPT IN PONDS?
WHAT IS IT THAT COMES NATURALLY TO WILD TOHDA...
THINK, ERIN.

WELL,
WHY DON'T YOU TAKE THE PORK OUT OF THE POT?
DON'T TALK ABOUT IT.
UNTIL YOU UNDER-STAND...
WHY YOU SHOULDN'T.
BUT...
EVEN IF YOU FIND IT, DO NOT TELL OTHER PEOPLE
WOW!
DELICIOUS, ISN'T IT?

LAGOS PLANTS ARE EVERGREEN— THE LEAVES REMAIN EVEN IN WINTER...
I USED THEM OFTEN DURING THE TIMES I SPENT IN THE MOUNTAINS
UNLIKE POTS, THEY RID MEAT OF ITS SMELL,
AND AT THE SAME TIME, ADD AN AROMA TO IT
Clatter
MOTHER,
YOU DIDN'T LIVE...
IN THIS VILLAGE...
WHEN YOU WERE YOUNGER, DID YOU?
...
Thump
Thump
Thump
I SUPPOSE...
Gasp

WERE YOU UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT IT WAS A FORBIDDEN SUBJECT?
...I'VE NEVER TALKED TO YOU ABOUT THIS, HAVE I?

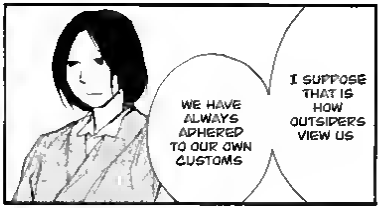

TONIGHT I WILL TELL YOU ABOUT MYSELF, AND ABOUT YOUR FATHER.
YOU'RE OLD ENOUGH TO UNDERSTAND THINGS NOW.
Nod


YES
DIDN'T YOU?
YOU HEARD YOUR GRAND-FATHER CALL ME AN AHRYO, EARLIER

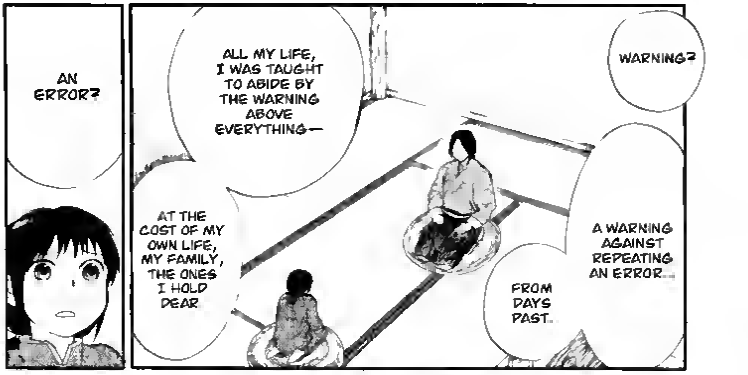
THE VILLAGERS...
SEEM TO THINK THE AHRYO ARE TALL, MYSTERIOUS FOLK WHO APPEAR AND DISAPPEAR IN THE FOG
THEY MAY BE PEDDLERS OF POWERFUL, SECRET HERBS...
AND EXCELLENT PHYSICIANS,
BUT THEY ALSO HAPPEN TO BE AN EERIE PEOPLE
WHO WORSHIP DEVIANT GODS

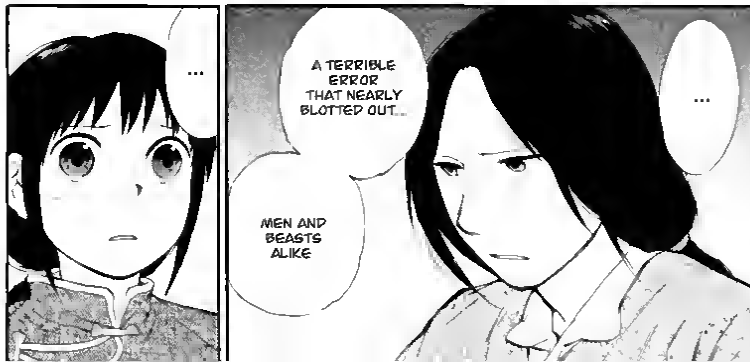
BUT...
THE NAME AHRYO...
ORIGINATED FROM A MISHEARING OF OUR TRUE NAME.

IS THAT WHAT YOU THINK?


I SUPPOSE THAT IS HOW OUTSIDERS VIEW US
WE HAVE ALWAYS ADHERED TO OUR OWN CUSTOMS

THE COMBINATION OF AH, 'MIST', AND RYO, 'FOLK', FITTED THE GENERAL PERCEPTION OF US SO WELL THAT IT BECAME WIDESPREAD.
OUR NAME, TO BE ACCURATE, IS AOHRHO.
IT MEANS 'WARNING' (AOH) 'ABIDERS' (RHO).


AN ERROR?
ALL MY LIFE, I WAS TAUGHT TO ABIDE BY THE WARNING ABOVE EVERYTHING—
AT THE COST OF MY OWN LIFE, MY FAMILY, THE ONES I HOLD DEAR
WARNING?
A WARNING AGAINST REPEATING AN ERROR...
FROM DAYS PAST.


...
A TERRIBLE ERROR THAT NEARLY BLOTTED OUT...
MEN AND BEASTS ALIKE
...

FOR GENERA-TIONS,
MY PEOPLE HAVE BEEN RIGOROUSLY TEACHING THEIR CHILDREN
TO OBEY THE LAW FROM THE DAY THEY WERE BORN.
MY ANCESTORS PLEDGED TO ABIDE BY THE WARNING IN AN ATTEMPT TO PREVENT THE SAME DESTRUCTIVE ERROR FROM EVER REPEATING
THEY BECAME NOMADS WHO LIVED IN THE WILD
AND SERVED NEITHER THE YOJE NOR THE ARHAN
MARRIAGE TO OUTSIDERS IS FORBIDDEN.
BECAUSE ONE OF OUR LAWS
PROHIBITS SETTLING IN ONE PLACE
I BROKE THAT LAW.
THE MOMENT I MET YOUR FATHER
AND DECIDED TO LIVE IN THIS VILLAGE WITH HIM,
I WAS NO LONGER AN AOHRHO
...

YOU WILL UNDERSTAND IT BETTER THEN.
IN THAT CASE, KEEP WHAT I SAID IN MIND WHEN YOU'RE OLDER, LOOK BACK AND THINK
OF COURSE
YES.
IS IT TOO DIFFICULT TO TAKE IN?
...
ERIN

THAT WAS FATHER?
I WAS LOOKING FOR CHACHIMO FLOWERS...
WHEN I FOUND A YOUNG MAN LYING ON THE GROUND HALFWAY UP THE CLIFF
I FIRST MET YOUR FATHER...
IN THE ROCKY AREA OF SAMOCK
YES
HE'D HIT HIS HEAD BADLY,
AND HE HAD LEG FRACTURES
HE WAS HURT?
YES
HE TOLD ME HE'D LOST HIS FOOTING WHILE HE WAS DEER HUNTING
THAT WAS HOW I MET YOUR FATHER
SO I DID
YOU HELPED HIM, DIDN'T YOU?

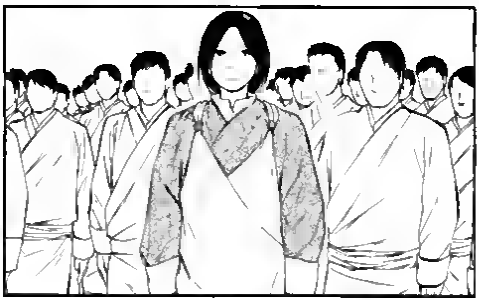
ASSON, YOUR FATHER,
WAS A VERY GENTLE MAN.
HE RARELY SPOKE,
BUT HIS SMILE WOULD LIGHT UP A ROOM LIKE THE SUN PEEKING OUT BETWEEN CLOUDS.
ERIN,
YOU REMIND ME OF HIM.
YOUR PRESENCE BRINGS ME WARMTH

JANGLE
Thump
JANGLE
JANGLE
JANGLE
REIN
Neigh
TEN OF THE ARHAN'S TREASURED KIBA DIED IN YOUR CARE
IS THAT TRUE?

WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE KIBA?
COME FORWARD!
flinch

...

UNFORTUNATELY, SIR,
IT IS TRUE



YOU. AN AHRYO?!
!
HEAVENS!

IT WAS I.

WHAT WERE YOU THINKING?!
HOW DARE YOU LET AN AHRYO WOMAN TAKE CHARGE OF THE ARHAN'S TREASURED ASSETS!
I BEG YOUR FORGIVE-NESS, SIR
HOW-EVER,
THIS WOMAN IS AN OUTSTANDING HEALER—
Whip

OUT-STANDING HEALER. YOU SAY?
VERY LIKELY
THE AHRYO EMPLOY OUTLANDISH HEALING TECHNIQUES. THE LOT OF THEM
Silence .. ...

BUT...
A TOHDA CARETAKER NEED NOT BE SKILLED IN HEALING.
WHAT MATTERS. ABOVE ALL,
IS UNDIVIDED LOYALTY TOWARD THE ARHAN!
AS HEAD OF THESE HERDSMEN. YOU OUGHT TO HAVE KNOWN BETTER!

I WOULDN'T BE SO SURE.
HAH!
SHE NO LONGER FOLLOWS THE AHRYO'S LAWS AND HAS PLEDGED LOYALTY TO HIS GRACE THE ARHAN
THIS WOMAN MARRIED MY SON MORE THAN 10 YEARS AGO AND BECAME A RESIDENT OF THE VILLAGE
WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, SIR,
THEY WOULD SOONER KILL THEIR CHILDREN THAN DISOBEY THEIR LAWS
THE AHRYO PLACE GREAT IMPORTANCE ON THEIR LAWS, OR SO I HEAR
ANSWER ME!
HOW DID IT COME ABOUT THAT EVERY SINGLE ONE OF THE KIBA IN YOUR CARE DIED, AND NO OTHER TOHDA?
IF YOU ARE SUCH A GOOD HEALER, YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO EXPLAIN THEIR DEATHS!

DID YOU POISON THEM?
I DID NOT
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
BY POISONING?
Silence - - -
THE KIBA DIED BY POISONING.
TO PUT IT DELICATELY...

THEREFORE, FEEDING A TOHDA A MIXTURE OF TOKUJISUI AND ITS MUCUS DOES NO HARM TO ITS HEALTH.
IT IS A WAY TO IMPART ALL THE NUTRIENTS
EVERY HERDSMAN KNOWS THE TOKUJISUI CONTAINS RATHER STRONG INGREDIENTS.
THE MUCUS THAT COVERS A TOHDA'S BODY ACTS AS A PROTECTIVE LAYER

THAT HAD NOT BEEN THE CASE DURING MY MIDNIGHT ROUND THE PREVIOUS NIGHT.
I THUS WENT ABOUT GIVING THEM THEIR USUAL SERVING OF TOKUJISUI
YESTERDAY MORNING, HOWEVER, THE MUCUS ON THE TOHDA'S BODIES HAD THINNED DOWN IN PLACES FOR NO KNOWN REASON

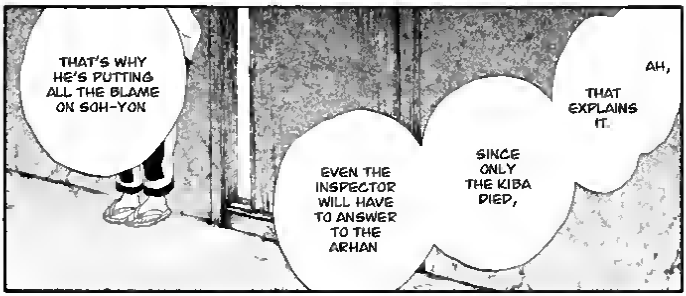
WHY?
YOU'RE SAYING THE CHANGE TOOK PLACE OVERNIGHT?
I DO NOT KNOW.
SHE WILL BE QUESTIONED AND THEN PUNISHED!
TAKE HER!

MOTHER!!
!
DON'T!
...!

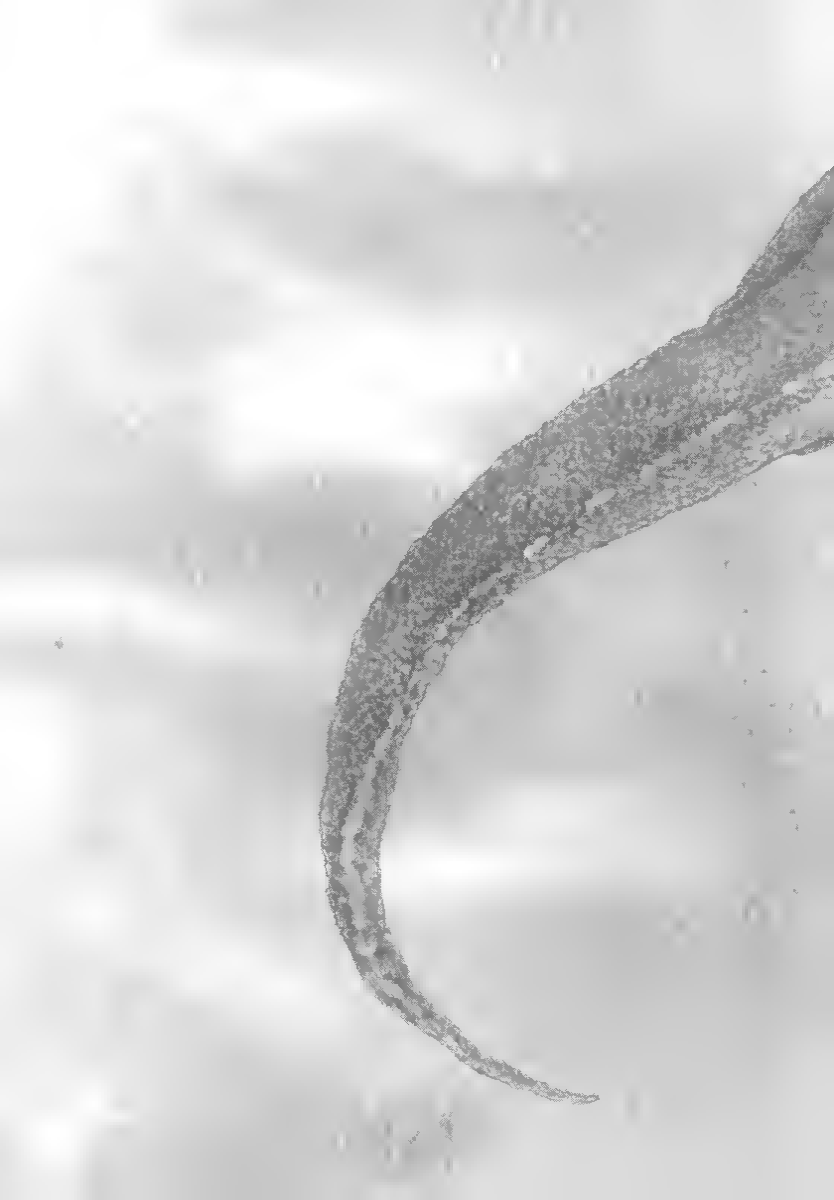
I DON'T REMEMBER...

WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN THE LAST THREE DAYS.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
EVERYTHING SEEMS SO FAR AWAY.
SH! YOU'RE TOO LOUD
WHAT IF YOU WOKE THE CHILDREN?
Twitch
THE TOHDA TRIAL IS TOMORROW AT DAWN?
YOU MEAN
...
...
WHISPER
WHISPER
SHE DOESN'T DESERVE TO BE SO— SO HORRIBLY EXECUTED
BUT THAT'S DREADFUL


THAT'S WHY HE'S PUTTING ALL THE BLAME ON SOH-YON
EVEN THE INSPECTOR WILL HAVE TO ANSWER TO THE ARHAN
SINCE ONLY THE KIBA DIED,
AH, THAT EXPLAINS IT.

EVEN SO, IT'S TOO CRUEL TO PUNISH HER...
BY FEEDING HER TO WILD TOHDA.



TO PUNISH HER BY FEEDING HER TO WILD TOHDA
Huff
Push
IT'S TOO CRUEL
Huff
THUMP
TREMBLE
Huff
THUMP
Huff
THUMP
DASH DASH

OTHERWISE, THE TOHDA WILL EAT HER ALIVE FIRST THING IN THE MORNING!
I HAVE TO SAVE MOTHER!

I'LL TAKE IT WITH ME!
BUT IT CAN CUT THROUGH A TOHDA'S SCALES.
Pluck
IT'S HEAVY.
Drop

Prologue part 3
Mother's Whistling

RUSTLE
HUFF
HUFF
RUSTLE
RUSH
RUSH
RUSH
!
...
SRP...
MOTHER
...

WHEN YOU WERE YOUNGER.
THE WAY YOU USED TO...
WE CAN LEAVE THE VILLAGE AND LIVE LIKE NOMADS..
ONCE YOU'RE SAFE...
WHERE'S THE DRUM?!
MOTHER MUST BE—
BANG—
Flap Flap Flap
BANG—
BANG—
BANG—

!
MOTHER!
PUSH
HOW CRUEL!
THEY'RE SO CRUEL!
JUST WAIT! I'LL SAVE YOU!

BANG—

WHEEZE
...
WHEEZE
DO IT.
GRAB
...

KERPLUNK

LOOK
IS THAT...
A PUP?
HEY.
IT'S OVER NOW.
WELL, WELL
IT'S A CHILD!
IT'S NOT A PUP,
MURMR
NO.
NO NEED.
WATCH.
SIR, SHALL I SHOOT HIM?
...
LOOKS LIKE A KNIFE.
HE'S GOT SOMETHING IN HIS MOUTH.
IS HE TRYING TO SAVE THE WOMAN?

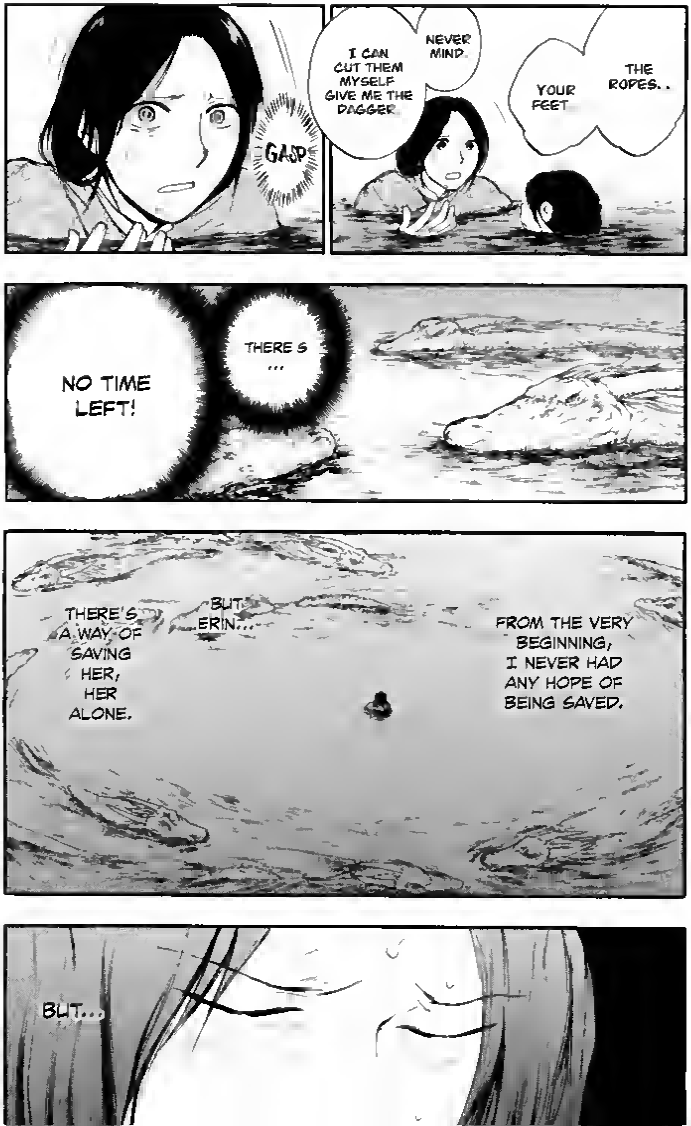
THE DRUMBEATS SERVED TO AWAKEN THE TOHDA.
THEY'LL SOON NOTICE THE ADDITIONAL TREAT WE THREW IN FOR THEM.
GURGL
HUFF
GWG
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
!

...
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
COUGH
HUFF
HUFF
I CAN FEEL MY LIFE SLIPPING AWAY FROM THE GASH IN MY STOMACH.
WITH THIS WOUND,
I DOUBT—

?
!
ERIN?!
ERIN!
ERIN!
MY DAGGER!
Huff
WHAT'S THAT IN HER MOUTH?

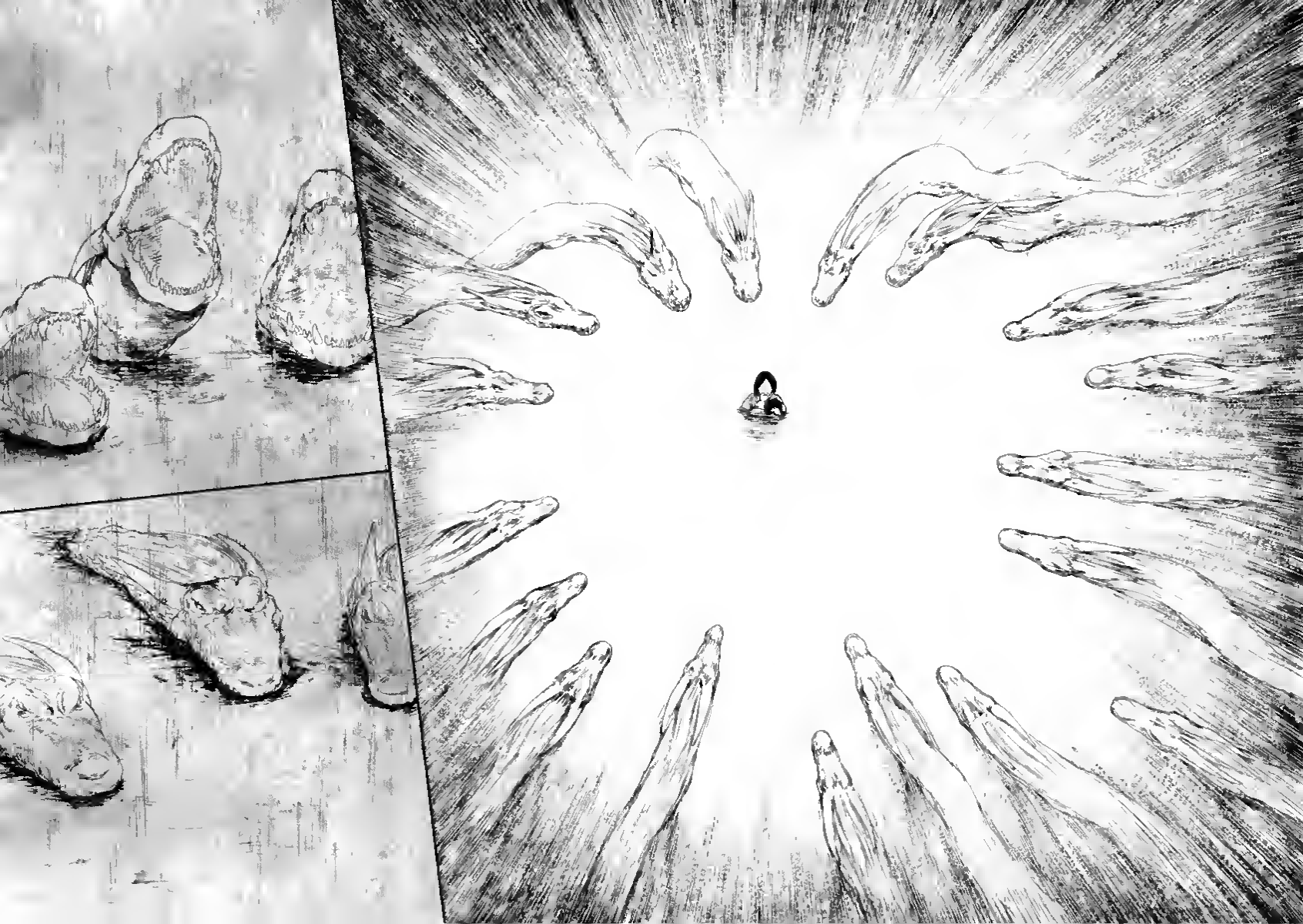
HUFF
GRAB MY SHOULDER!
ERIN. COME TO ME!
TOHDA!

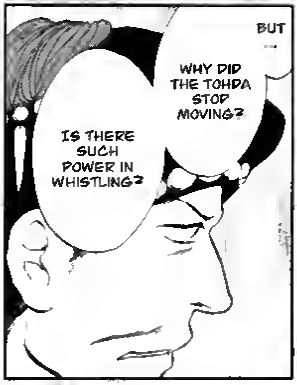
SLICE
SHR SHR SHR
YOUR HANDS...
ROPES...
M-
MOTHER!
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
COUGH
SPLASH
ERIN!
THANK YOU.
THANK YOU.


GASP
I CAN CUT THEM MYSELF GIVE ME THE DAGGER
NEVER MIND
YOUR FEET
THE ROPES..
NO TIME LEFT!
THERE S ...
THERE'S A WAY OF SAVING HER, HER ALONE.
BUT ERIN...
FROM THE VERY BEGINNING, I NEVER HAD ANY HOPE OF BEING SAVED.
BUT...

GASP
GRIP
I KNOW THERE WILL BE A TERRIBLE PRICE TO PAY.
...EVEN TO SAVE MY CHILD, IT IS FORBIDDEN TO ME.

HUG...
ERIN,
NEVER, EVER REPEAT WHAT I AM ABOUT TO DO.
IT IS A GRAVE OFFENSE.
LIVE, AND BE HAPPY.



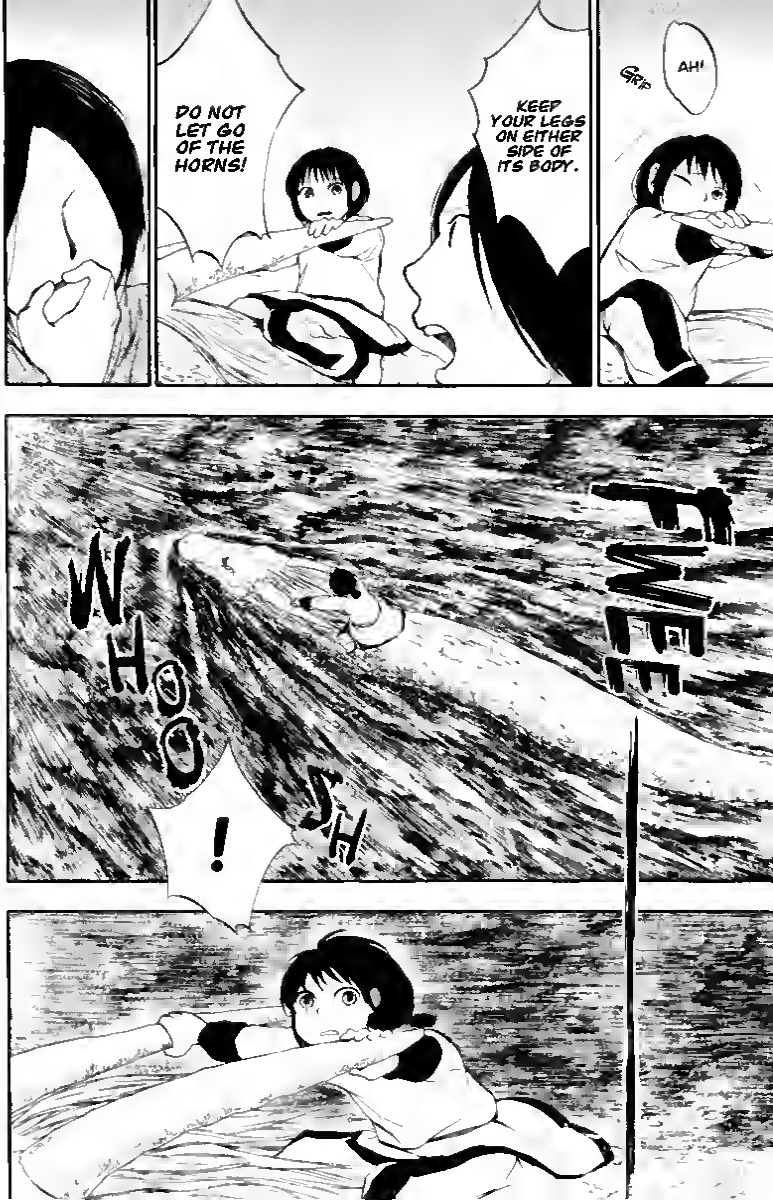

BUT...
WHY DID THE TOHDA STOP MOVING?
IS THERE SUCH POWER IN WHISTLING?

I GATHER SHE IS WHISTLING
I DO NOT KNOW, SIR

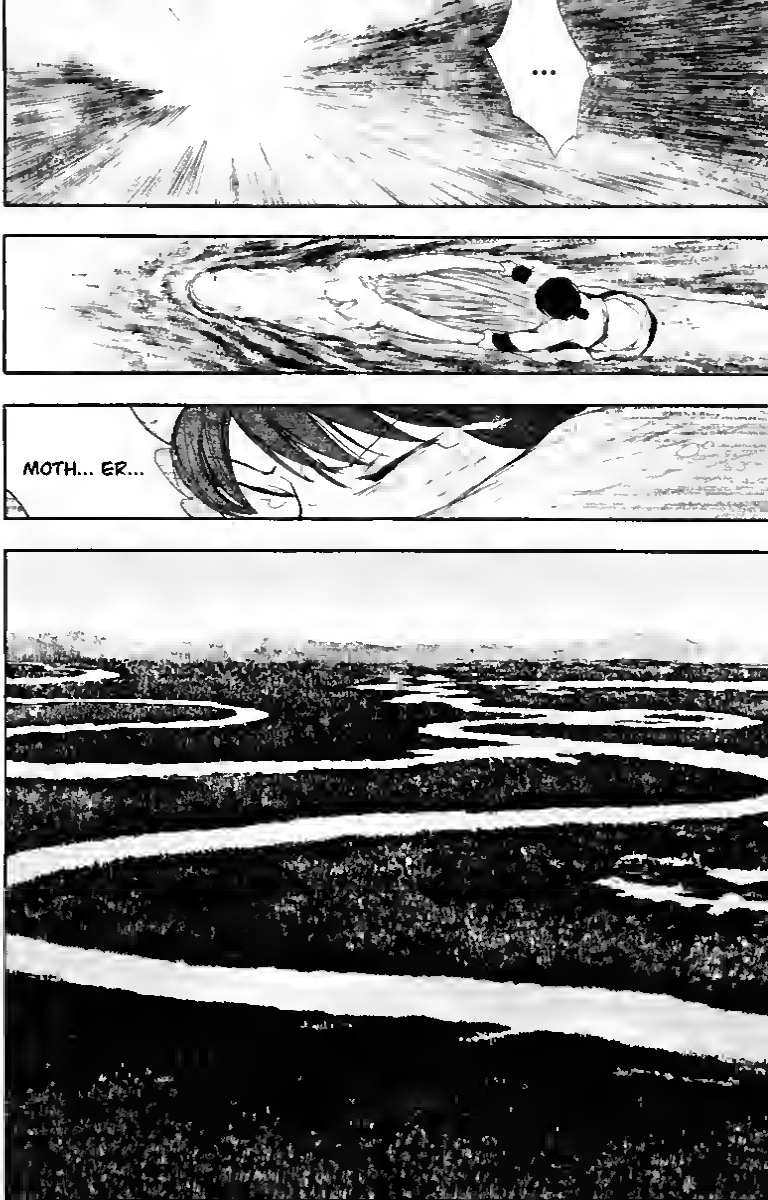
IS THAT WOMAN DOING?
WHAT...

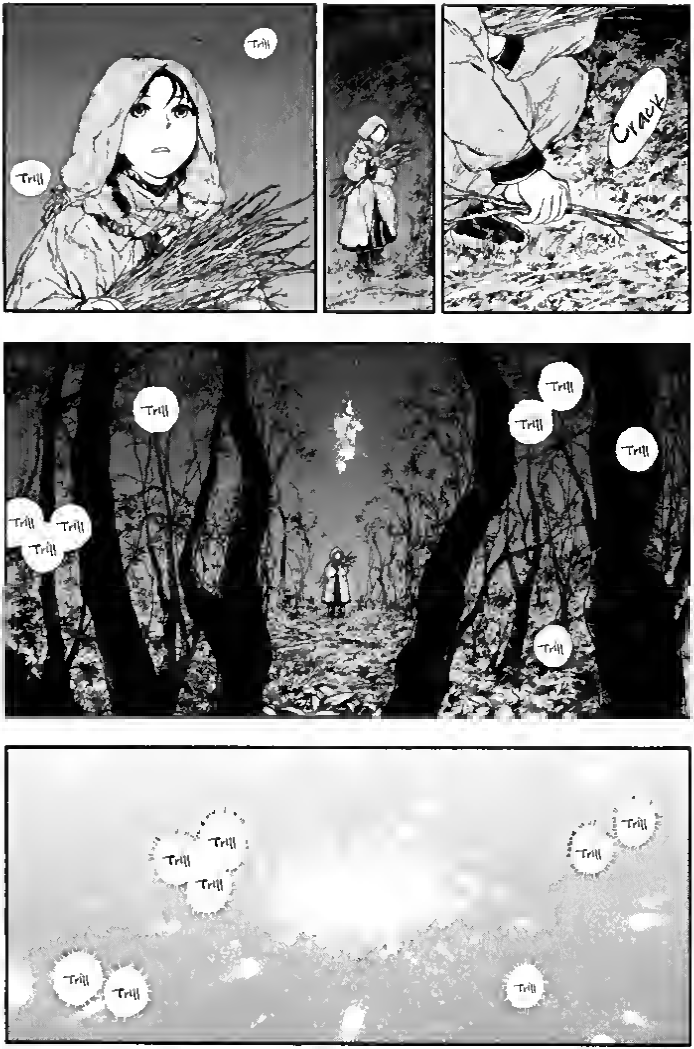
EVEN A SOUNDLESS WHISTLE CANNOT— SHOULD NOT STOP A WILD TOHDA.
NO...
THAT CAN'T BE POSSIBLE.

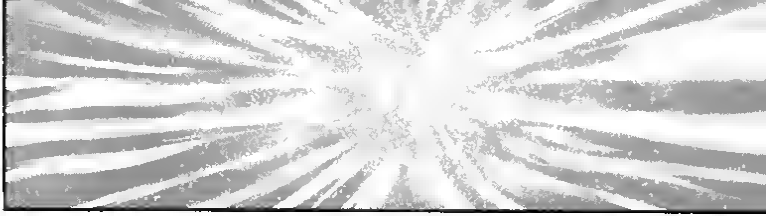
SWOOSH
TWITCH
EEEEEK!
ERIN,
GRAB THE HORNS...
AND MOUNT!
!


DO NOT LET GO OF THE HORNS!
KEEP YOUR LEGS ON EITHER SIDE OF ITS BODY.
GRIP
AH!
WHOOSH
!

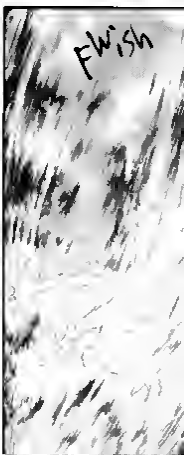
MOTHER!
EH?!
MOTHER!
JUST GO!
DON'T LOOK BACK!
GO!
MOTHER!!


...
MOTH... ER...


Trill
Trill
Crack
Trill
Trill
Trill
Trill
Trill
Trill
Trill
Trill
Trill
Trill
Trill
Trill
Trill

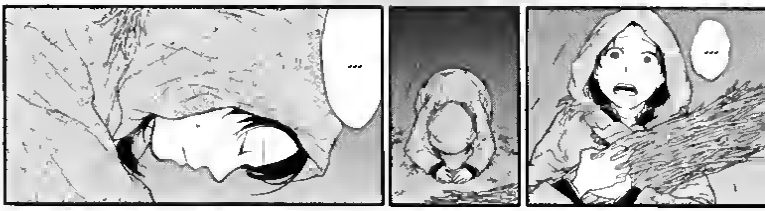


*Spirit birds



*Prologue, part 4*

# *The Spirit Beast*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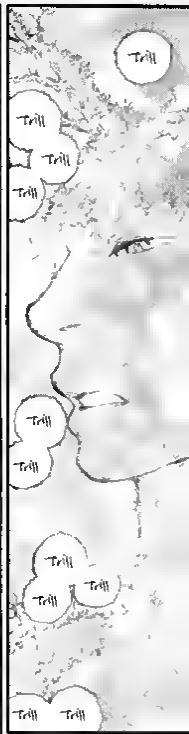
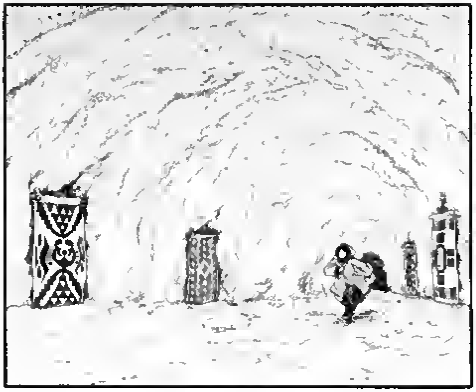
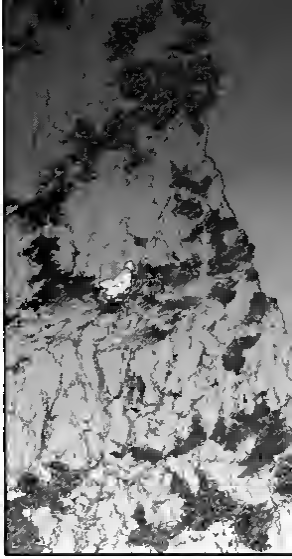

Trill
Trill
Trill
Trill
Trill
Trill
Trill
Trill
Trill
Trill
Trill

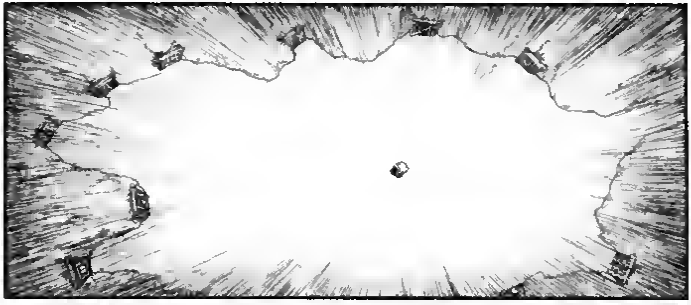
Scatter
...
Flop
Flop
Dash
muttter
muttter



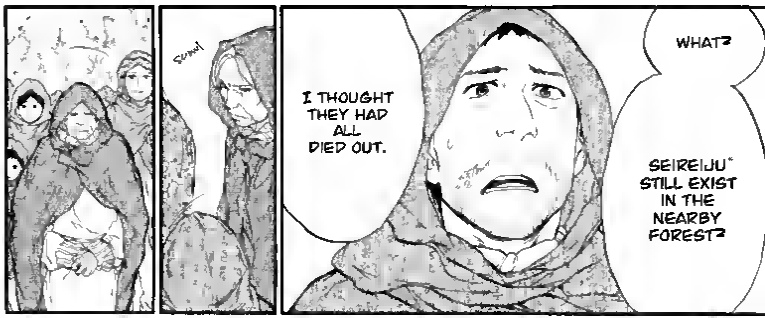


Twist——
Huff
Huff

Rustle



RUSTLE
RUSTLE
FLAP.
TRUDGE
IS SOMETHING THE MATTER?




*Spirit beast

"SOMEONE USED THE ART OF CONTROL.
SOMEONE WHISTLED THE TOHDA TUNE,"
IT SAID.
I DON'T HAVE MUCH EXPERIENCE. I'M AFRAID I MAY NOT HAVE CAUGHT ALL THE WORDS, BUT...
RUZZ
!
YOU WILL BE INFORMED.
PLEASE RETURN TO YOUR HOMES.
THE ELDERS' COUNCIL MEETING WILL NOW BEGIN.
NO,
THAT WAS ALL.
DID THE SEIREIJU SAY ANYTHING ELSE?

SHE IGNORED THE WARNING AND BROKE OUR LAW
IT MUST HAVE BEEN SOH-YON...
WHO WHISTLED THE TUNE
FOR MY DAUGHTER BECOMING WHAT SHE DID!
I WILL TAKE FULL RESPONSI-BILITY...
PLEASE FORGIVE ME.
BOW
WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT SHE WOULD EMPLOY THE ART?
SHE WAS SO INTEL-LIGENT,
SO KIND,
SO STRONG...

WE MUST HURRY.
HMM
WHAT HAPPENED.
LET US HAVE SOMEONE INVESTIGATE
SEND FOR THE INQUIRER.
SUPPOSE SHE HAD BEEN SEEN WHISTLING
SOONER OR LATER WORD WOULD REACH THE ARHAN OF OUR PEOPLE'S ABILITY—
THE ABILITY TO CONTROL TOHDA.
HE WOULD BEGIN SEEKING US OUT.
IN HOPES OF LEARNING THE ART.
LET THE OTHERS KNOW.
WE'RE GOING INTO HIDING.
TELL THEM THAT UNTIL WE HAVE A CLEARER PICTURE OF THE MATTER, WE WILL BE ON CONSTANT ALERT,
AND THAT THERE WILL BE NO CONTACT WITH THE VILLAGES IN THE VALLEY.

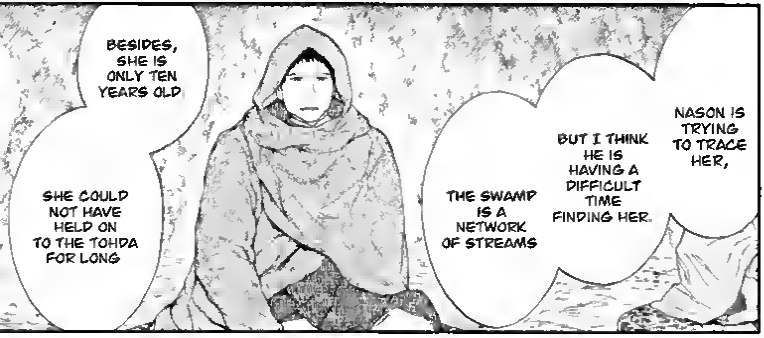
Crunch..
!

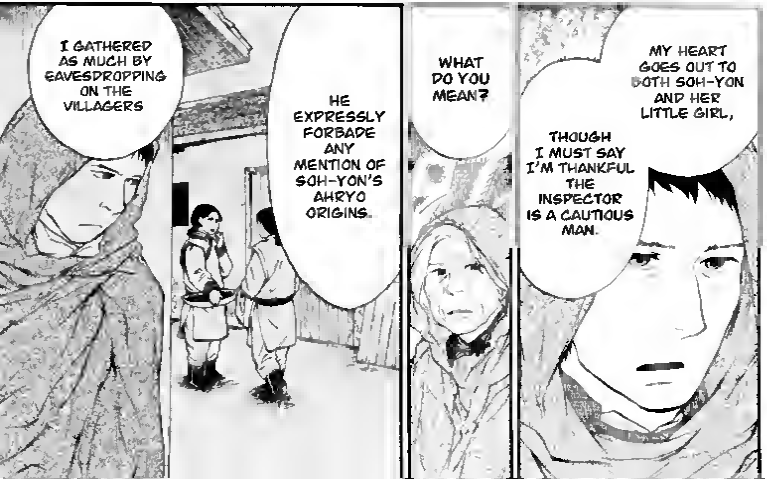
SOH-YON WAS EXECUTED?
YOU'RE SAYING...
THAT...

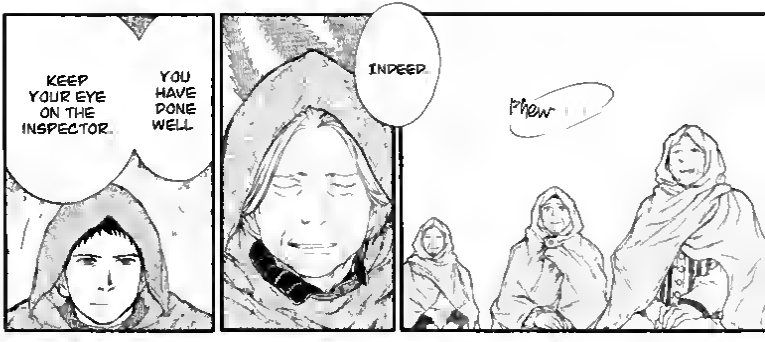
THE INSPECTOR DID NOT ACCOUNT FOR HIS OWN NEGLIGENCE, DECLARED THE TOHDA'S DEATHS A PREMEDITATED CRIME ON HER PART, AND EXECUTED HER
IT WAS TERRIBLE, THE WAY SHE WAS EXECUTED
HOWEVER
I SNEAKED IN TO HAVE A LOOK AT THE CARCASSES, AND THE CHANGE IN THE MUCUS EXPLAINED IT ALL—
IRONICALLY, SOH-YON MAY HAVE ACTUALLY BEEN RESPONSIBLE.
THEY HAD ENTERED THE MATING SEASON.
SHE HAD TO HAVE KNOWN THE TOKUJISUI WAS POISONOUS TO KIBA WHOSE MUCUS HAD CHANGED.
SOH-YON WAS TOO CLEVER NOT TO HAVE NOTICED.
SHE KNEW, AND SHE STILL FED THEM WITH IT.
!
84.22

SOH-YON...
ABIDED BY THE WARNING
YOUR DAUGHTER STAYED TRUE TO OUR PRINCIPLES
THOUGH SHE KNEW SHE MIGHT BE EXECUTED,
SHE CHOSE TO END THE TOHDA'S LIVES IN ORDER TO PRESERVE OUR SECRET
EVEN SO,
SHE COULD NOT BEAR THE THOUGHT
OF HER OWN CHILD BEING EATEN BY TOHDA.
AT THE VERY END, HER EMOTIONS WON OUT

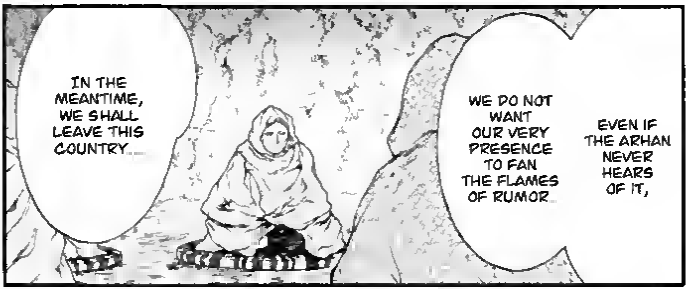
WHAT OF..
SOH-YON'S CHILD?
...


BESIDES, SHE IS ONLY TEN YEARS OLD
SHE COULD NOT HAVE HELD ON TO THE TOHDA FOR LONG
THE SWAMP IS A NETWORK OF STREAMS
BUT I THINK HE IS HAVING A DIFFICULT TIME FINDING HER.
NASON IS TRYING TO TRACE HER,


I GATHERED AS MUCH BY EAVESDROPPING ON THE VILLAGERS
HE EXPRESSLY FORBADE ANY MENTION OF SOH-YON'S AHRYO ORIGINS.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
MY HEART GOES OUT TO BOTH SOH-YON AND HER LITTLE GIRL,
THOUGH I MUST SAY I'M THANKFUL THE INSPECTOR IS A CAUTIOUS MAN.


KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE INSPECTOR.
YOU HAVE DONE WELL.
INDEED.
Phew

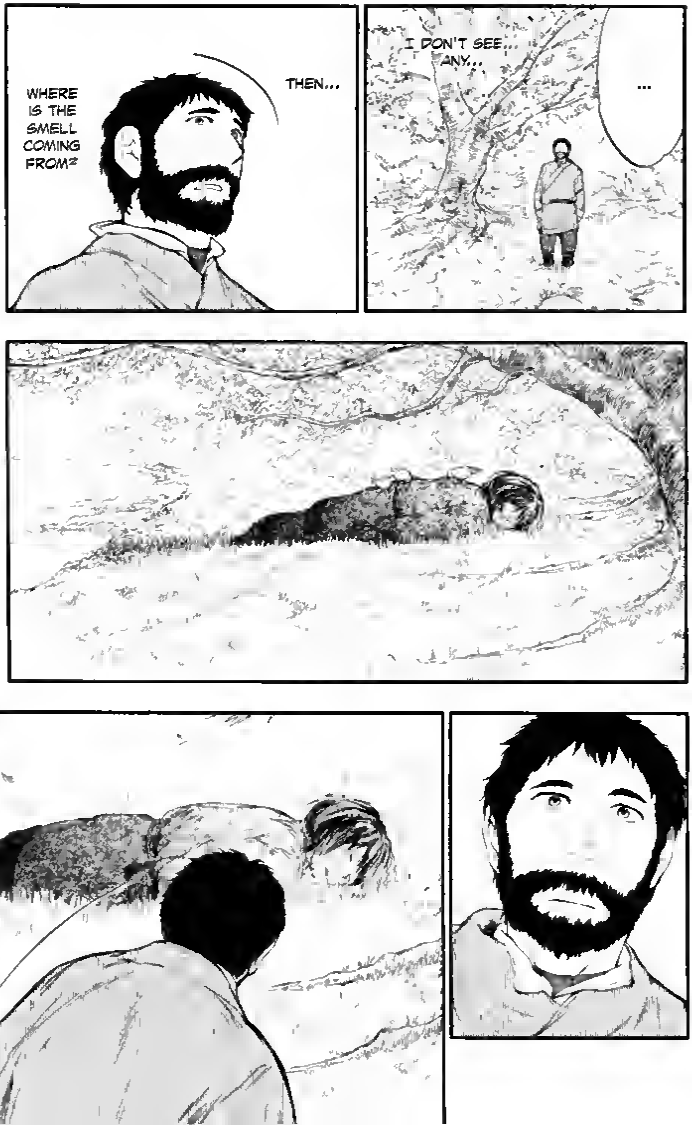
WE CANNOT AFFORD ANOTHER DISASTER BROUGHT ON BY OUR ART.
WE MUST NEVER IGNORE THE WARNING.
NO MATTER THE REASON,


IN THE MEANTIME, WE SHALL LEAVE THIS COUNTRY.
WE DO NOT WANT OUR VERY PRESENCE TO FAN THE FLAMES OF RUMOR.
EVEN IF THE ARHAN NEVER HEARS OF IT,

...AND HIDE IN THE MOUNTAINS...
UNTIL ALL IS FORGOTTEN.

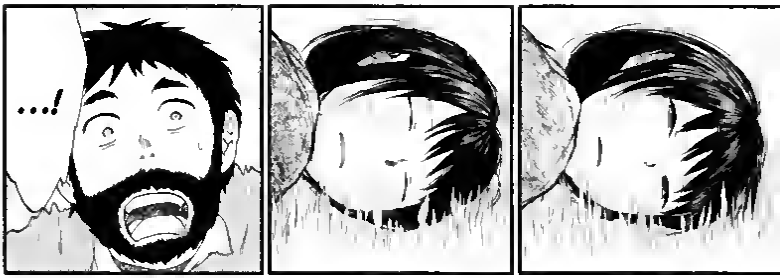
RIPPLE
THIS IS GOING TO BE A GOOD YEAR.
I EXPECT A HUGE HARVEST OF GOOD QUALITY HONEY.
?
IS THAT?
WHAT...

Ruffle...
WHAT AM I TO DO?
WHAT A WAY TO START YOUR DAY, FINDING THIS OF ALL THINGS.
...
A DEAD...
BODY
Gasp
!
Whirr...
THAT SMELL...
TOHDA?!

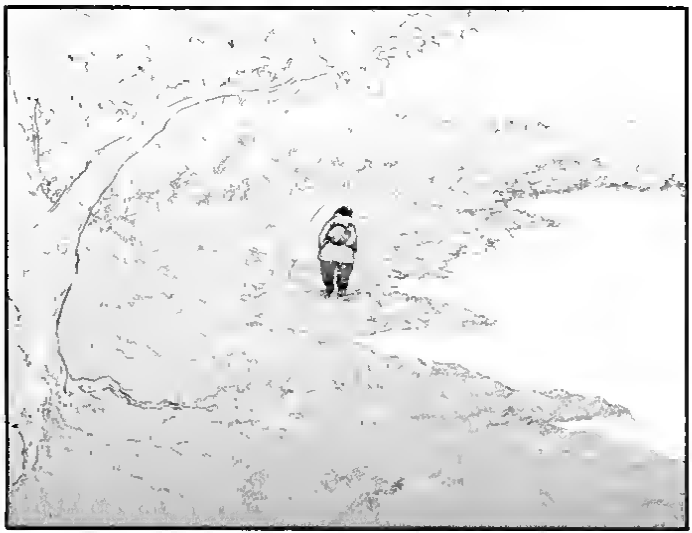

WHERE IS THE SMELL COMING FROM?
THEN...
I DON'T SEE... ANY...
...

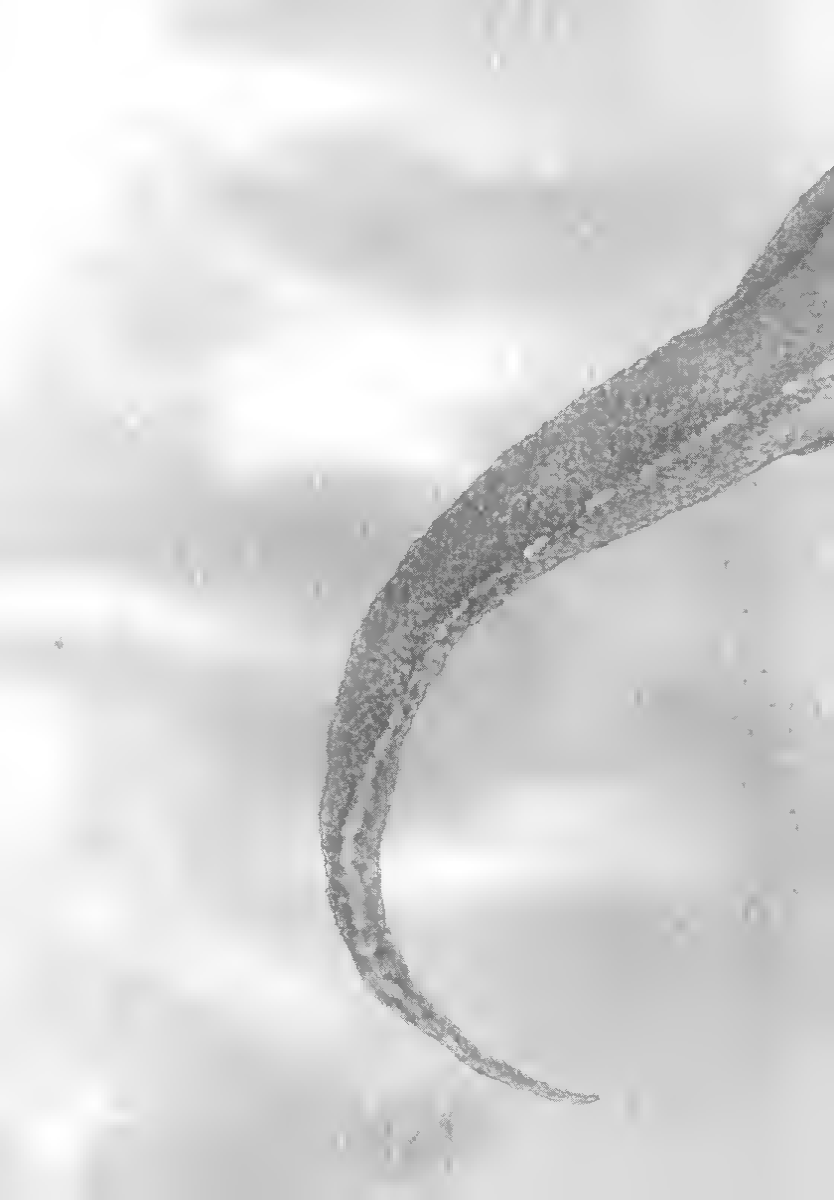
...
POOR LITTLE GIRL.
SO YOUNG...
!
Huff...

SHE'S ALIVE!
HEY!
HEY!
WAKE UP!
Pat
Pat
Pat
DO YOU FEEL ME?
DO YOU HEAR ME?
...


...!

Roll
THIS WON'T DO.
NOT ONE BIT.





!
Slosh
Slosh
Sob
Throb
Throb
Throb
MOTHER...
Slosh
MOTHER?
HURTS.
IT-HURTS.
Ache
Throb
ERIN.
Silence
MOTHER!

Cough
Gurgle
Glug
!
SPLASH
!
TOHDA!
?
WHERE ARE THEY GOING?
ERIN_

MOTHER?!
GO_
ERIN_

MOTHER!
Chapter 1, part 1
The Child Washed Ashore

NOOOO!
NOOOO!
THERE, THERE.
IT'S ALL RIGHT.
JUST A DREAM.

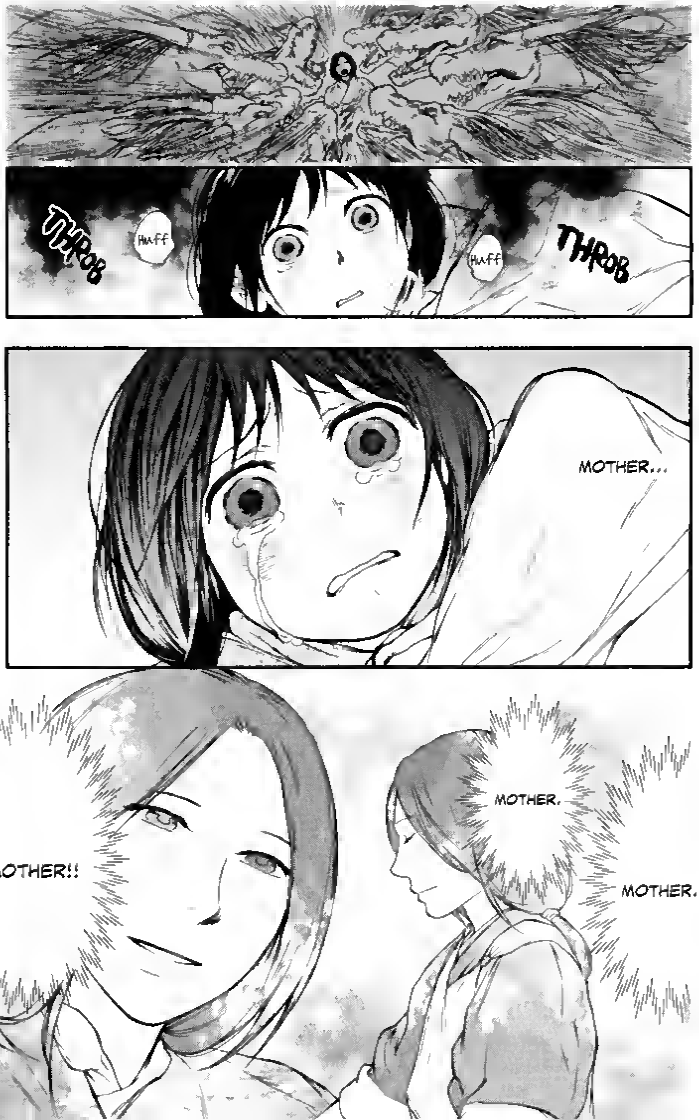
YOU'RE ONLY DREAMING.
NOTHING TO BE AFRAID OF.
Pat
Pat
...
ZZZZZ
ZZZZ

Chirp
Chirp
Shift
...
Bowl
zzz

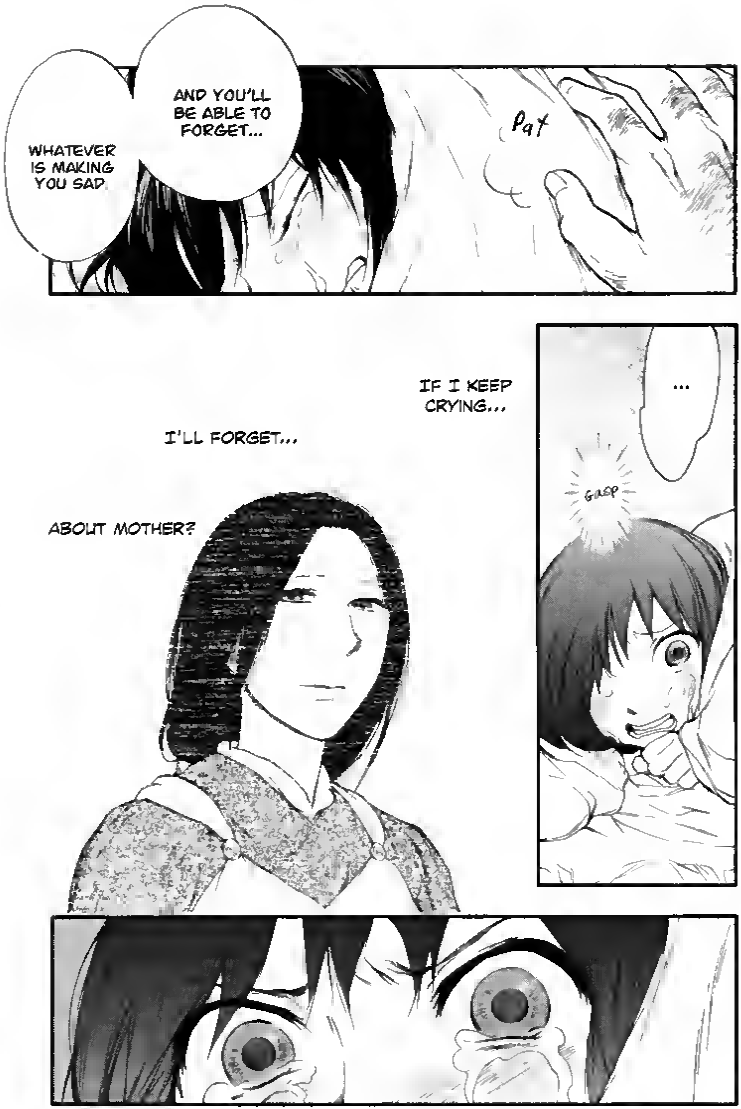
Tumble
Lean
!
Wham
WH-
WHAT?
OW, OW, OW.

HEE...
...
ARE YOU LAUGHING AT ME?
...
YOU.
Ha
ha
ha
Tee
hee
I SEE YOUR FEVER'S GONE DOWN.
YOU LOOK HALE.
IS THE PAIN BETTER?

SHOW ME THE ABRASIONS ON YOUR LEGS.
I SEE.
Nod
THEY'RE NOT SO SWOLLEN NOW.
I'D SAY YOU'LL GET BETTER IN NO TIME.
Thump
BUT YOU CAME BACK
YOU NEARLY DIED,
YOU'RE VERY LUCKY,
YOU KNOW.


Q
THROB
Huff
Huff
THROB
MOTHER...
MOTHER!!
MOTHER.
MOTHER.

UGH...
HIC
SNIFFLE
THE HARDER YOU CRY,
THE BETTER YOU'LL FEEL.
LET IT ALL OUT.


WHATEVER IS MAKING YOU SAD
AND YOU'LL BE ABLE TO FORGET...
Pat
...
GASP
IF I KEEP CRYING...
I'LL FORGET...
ABOUT MOTHER?

I DON'T WANT TO FORGET MOTHER, EVER!

WON'T
CRY.
...
I...
WHAT'S WRONG,
HMM?
WHY?
WHAT?
...
...
STEP
STEP
STEP
WELL.

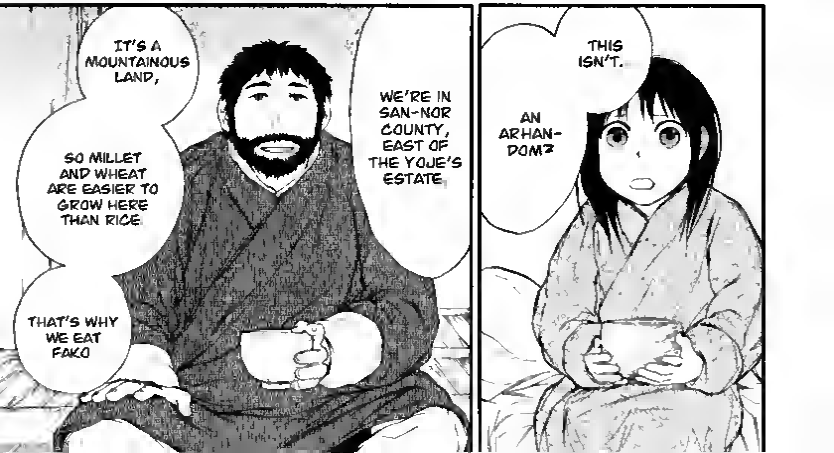
!
WOOZY
Sniff
Sniff
...
...
Puff
DIZZY..
WHAT IF... IT...
NEVER GOES AWAY?
Whiff
Burble Burble
...
NICE SMELL.
Rumble
STRONG ENOUGH TO EAT?
Creep
Creep

HERE'S...
YOUR BREAKFAST.
!!
YUMMMMM
DO YOU LIKE IT?
NOD NOD
IT'S GOOD, ISN'T IT?
MY PET BEES...
MADE THE HONEY.
THE BEST HONEY IN ALL THE LAND!

AH.
WHAT..
IS THIS?
HONEY SOUP.
DELI-CIOUS.
THAT'S FAKO, A KIND OF MILLET.
WE MILL IT INTO FLOUR,
KNEAD IT WITH WATER, AND BAKE IT.
SMELLS GOOD AND TASTES GOOD, NO?
WE EAT IT ALL THE TIME.
WHAT..
DO YOU USUALLY HAVE...
IN THE MORNING?
...

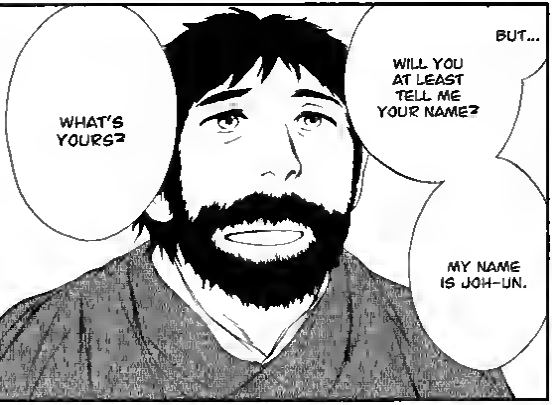
*A name for tenants of an Arhandom.


PERFECT FOR GROWING RICE.
AND THEY'RE BLESSED WITH PLAINS RICH IN WATER.
ARHANDOMS ARE FAR LARGER THAN THE YOJE'S ESTATE WHERE WE ARE,


IT'S A MOUNTAINOUS LAND,
SO MILLET AND WHEAT ARE EASIER TO GROW HERE THAN RICE.
THAT'S WHY WE EAT FAKO
WE'RE IN SAN-NOR COUNTY, EAST OF THE YOJE'S ESTATE.
THIS ISN'T.
AN ARHAN-DOM?

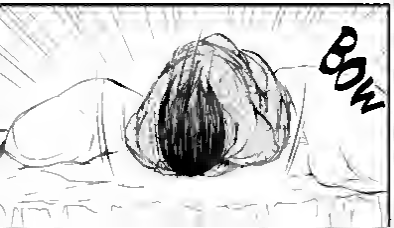
WHERE ARE YOUR PARENTS, CHILD?
YOU DIDN'T EVEN KNOW WHERE YOU WERE.
WHY WERE YOU UNCONSCIOUS BY THE LAKESIDE,
COVERED WITH MUD?
WHAT HAPPENED?
NO FAMILY?
YOU...
HAVE...

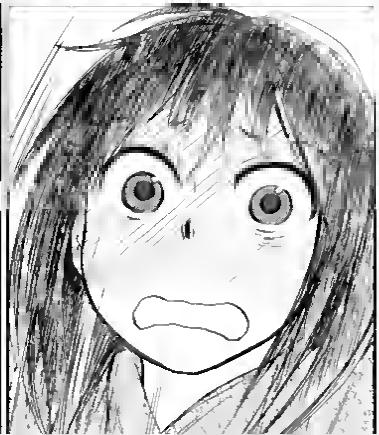
...


WHAT'S YOURS?
BUT...
WILL YOU AT LEAST TELL ME YOUR NAME?
MY NAME IS JOH-UN.

NEVER MIND.
IF YOU DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT, I WON'T MAKE YOU.

THUMP


BOW



MY NAME IS ERIN.
THANK YOU VERY MUCH..
FOR SAVING ME
A FINE NAME
...
ERIN FOR MOUNTAIN APPLE, EH?

HER POSTURE, HER MANNERS, AND HER CHOICE OF WORDS—
SHE'S NO DAUGHTER OF A NOMAD OR A TRAVELING PERFORMER.
PROBABLY FROM AN ARTISAN FAMILY OR HIGHER.
WHAT'S AN ARTISAN'S CHILD DOING HERE?
HER EYES ARE THE COLOR OF THE AHRYO
AND...

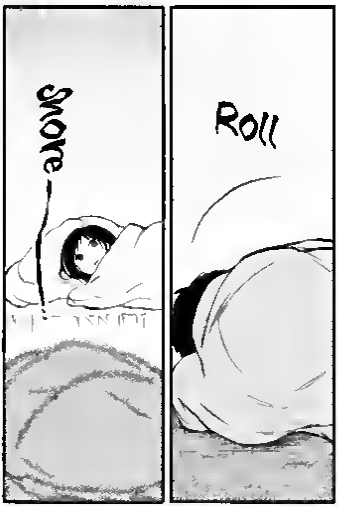
NO,
THE AHRYO DON'T MARRY OUTSIDE THEIR GROUP.
FROM WHAT I HEAR,
WOULD A NOMAD-HATING ARTISAN...
HAVE A CHILD WITH AN AHRYO?

IS YOUR LIFE STORY?
CHILD,
WHAT...

BOW
NOW THAT YOU'RE RECOVERED,
EAT AS MUCH AS YOU WANT
NO MATTER. I'LL FIND OUT IN TIME.

WELL,
I DIDN'T GET MUCH SLEEP,
SO I'LL CATCH SOME NOW
YOU SHOULD LIE DOWN, TOO, AND CALL IT A DAY
The privy is outside the door on your right

OR THE WAILS OF SAJU'S BABY SISTER, EITHER
Sleepy.
I DON'T HEAR THE HERDSMEN'S BELLS—
Mmm

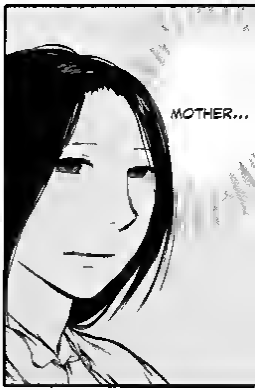

Snore—
Roll

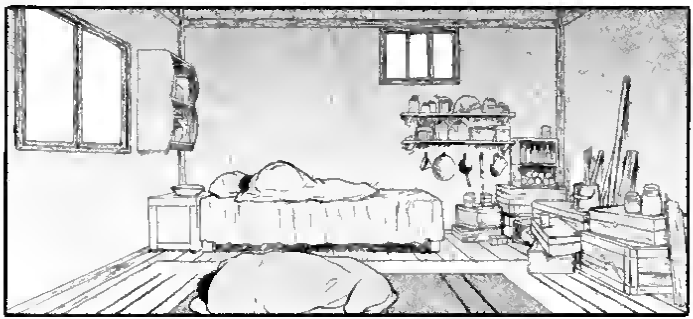
STOOD THERE AND WATCHED MOTHER DIE.
THE VILLAGERS...
SHE'S NOT IN THE VILLAGE ANYMORE.

Shake Shake

WHAT SHOULD I DO?
DO I GO BACK—

GOING TO DO NOW?
Thump
Thump
WHAT...
AM I...


MOTHER...



A tender moment
spent enjoying sights
never before seen.
Chapter 1 and 2
The Queen Flight
The Beast Player.
獣の奏者
けもの
そうじゃ
UEHASHI NAHOKO
TAKEMOTO ITOE

Chapter 1 part2
The Queen's Flight

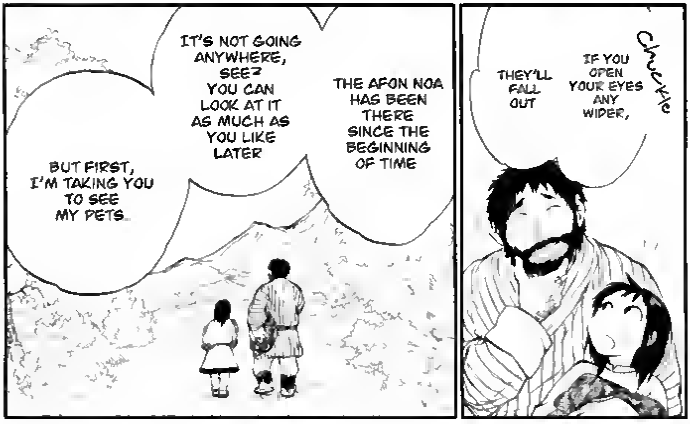
Perk
Chirp
Chirp
Clatter
Clatter
OH!
YOU'RE AWAKE.

YOU CHILDREN OFTEN RUN FEVERS,
BUT YOU DON'T TAKE LONG TO GET BETTER
WOULD YOU LIKE TO GO OUTSIDE?
NOD NOD
HMM
YOU LOOK MUCH BETTER TODAY
WHAT'S THIS?
...?
HERE TAKE THESE
C'MON,
I CAN'T WAIT TILL YOU SEE THEM
PROTECTIVE GEAR, TO KEEP YOU SAFE FROM MY PETS

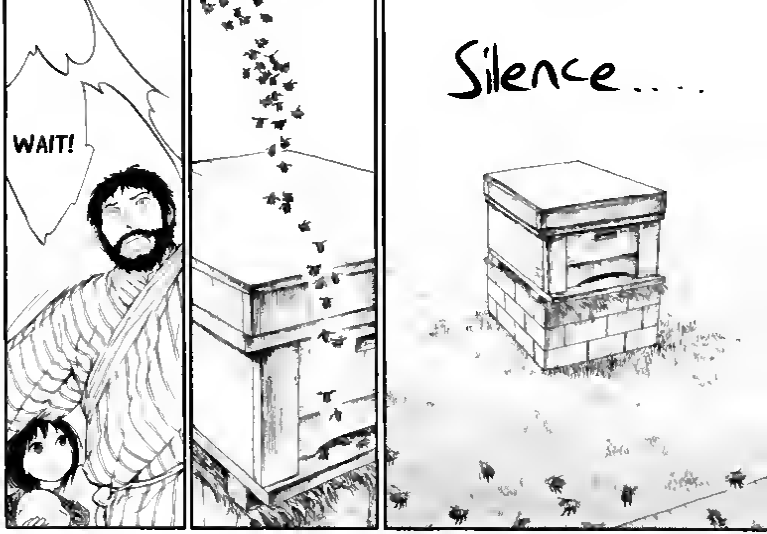
!
IS THIS YOUR FIRST TIME SEEING THE AFON NOA?
...
Nod

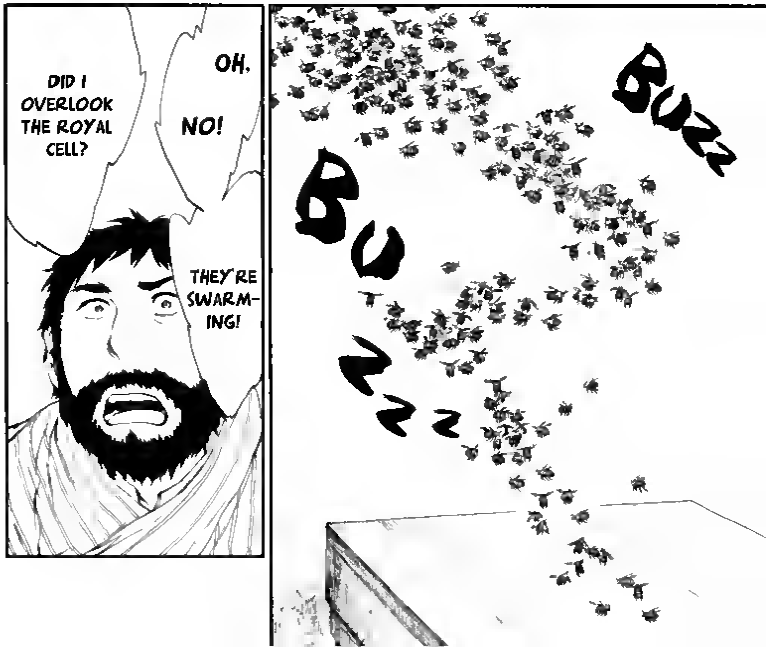
THAT'S THE WALL THAT SEPARATES THE WORLD OF MORTALS FROM THE WORLD OF DEITIES
THE YOJE'S ANCESTORS USED TO LIVE THERE
YOU KNOW, THE LAND OF GODS.
I'VE HEARD ABOUT IT.
MOTHER TOLD ME THE STORY.
THE AFON NOA?

I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M REALLY SEEING IT.
OOH.
YES.
LONG, LONG AGO, THE GODS BUILT TALL MOUNTAINS
TO MAKE UP THE DIVINE RANGE.
WHICH WOULD DIVIDE THE WORLD OF GODS AND THE WORLD OF MORTALS


BUT FIRST, I'M TAKING YOU TO SEE MY PETS.
IT'S NOT GOING ANYWHERE, SEE? YOU CAN LOOK AT IT AS MUCH AS YOU LIKE LATER
THE AFON NOA HAS BEEN THERE SINCE THE BEGINNING OF TIME
Chuckle
IF YOU OPEN YOUR EYES ANY WIDER,
THEY'LL FALL OUT

WHOA!
BUZZ


WAIT!
Silence....

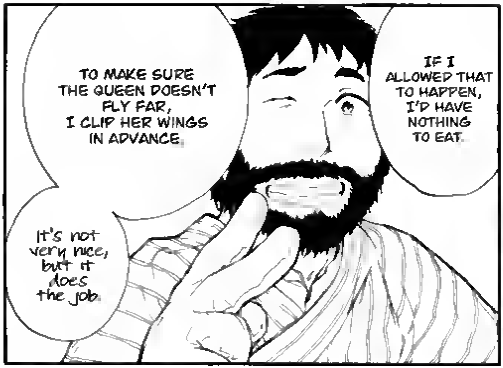

DID I OVERLOOK THE ROYAL CELL?
OH, NO!
THEY'RE SWARMING!
BUZZ
BUZZZZ

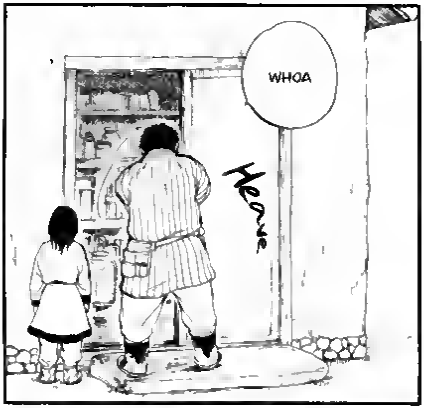
EEK!
!
BUZZ
BUZZZZZ
GRAB
NOT SO FAST YOU DON'T WANT TO ALARM THEM.
PUT THE HAT ON, SLOWLY
...
!
DON'T WORRY.
SO LONG AS YOU DON'T MOVE,
THE BEES WON'T ATTACK YOU

BUZZZZ
SLOWLY...
YOU CAN MOVE...
WE'RE SAFE NOW...
...
THEY'VE STOPPED MOVING?
BUZZ...

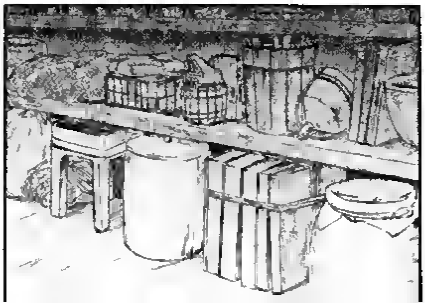
...
NOW THAT THEY'VE FOUND A BRANCH,
THEY'LL STAY THERE FOR ABOUT A HALF A DAY
...
WHY...
ARE THEY ON THAT BRANCH?
DOES IT HAVE HONEY?
Pff

THERE'S A QUEEN?
THEY'RE LEAVING THEIR OLD COLONY TO PREPARE A NEW NEST FOR THEIR QUEEN.
NO.
THE REST STAY WITH THE LARVA THAT WILL BECOME THE NEW QUEEN.
THE QUEEN BEE LEAVES WITH ABOUT HALF THE WORKER BEES TO FORM A NEW COLONY.
WHEN A HIVE IS TOO CROWDED,
DIDN'T YOU SEE THE LARGE BEE, THE VERY LAST ONE TO FLY THERE?
THAT'S THE QUEEN BEE


TO MAKE SURE THE QUEEN DOESN'T FLY FAR, I CLIP HER WINGS IN ADVANCE.
IF I ALLOWED THAT TO HAPPEN, I'D HAVE NOTHING TO EAT.
It's not very nice, but it does the job.
SO...
ARE THEY GOING SOMEWHERE FAR AWAY?

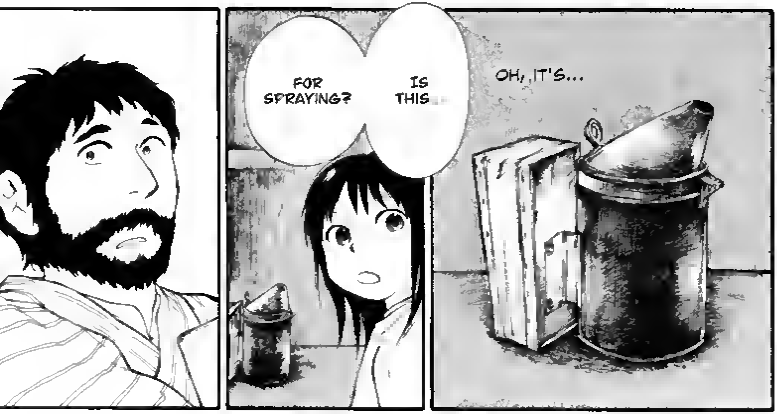

WHOA
Heave

WELL, NOW.
I HAVE TO SET UP A HIVE FOR THEM
HOW ABOUT GIVING ME A HAND?

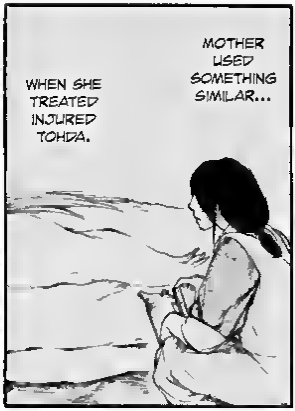


THIS IS THE ONLY EMPTY ONE LEFT.
I FORGOT.
ACK

YOU CAN TAKE THAT BLACK CANISTER OVER THERE.
I'M CARRYING THIS

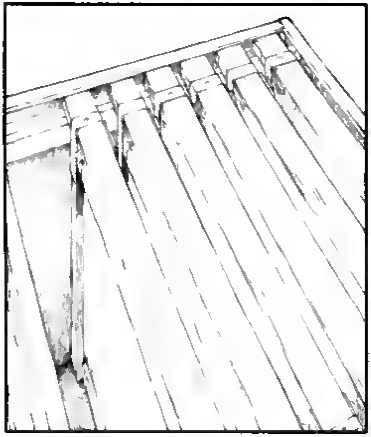

FOR SPRAYING?
IS THIS
OH, IT'S...

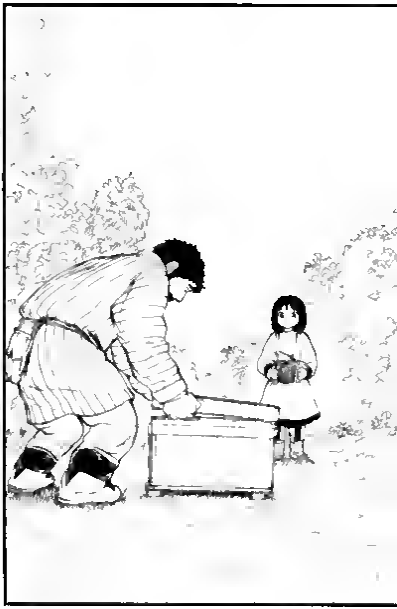
...

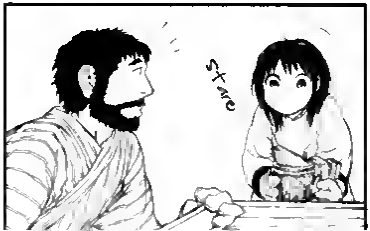

MOTHER USED SOMETHING SIMILAR...
WHEN SHE TREATED INJURED TOHDA.

YOU KNOW WHAT A SMOKER IS?
YES.

DASH



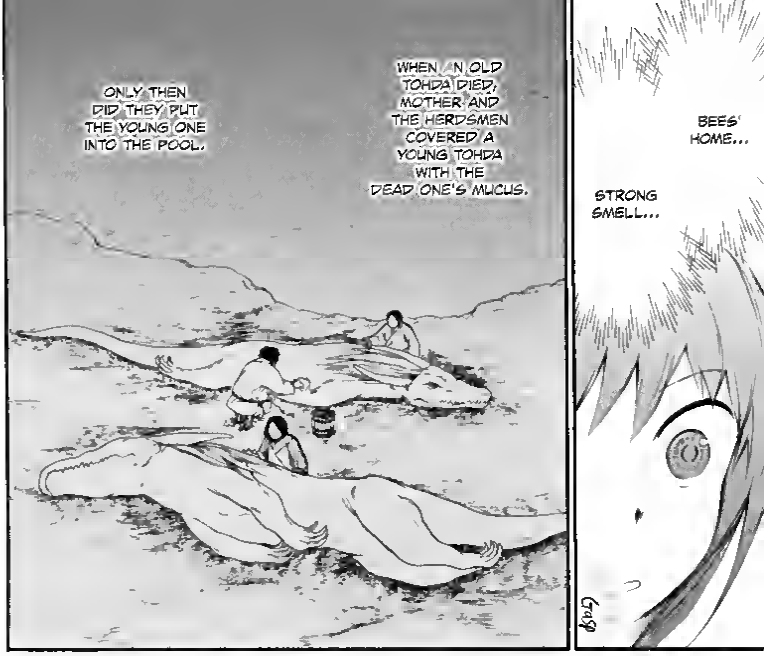



STARE

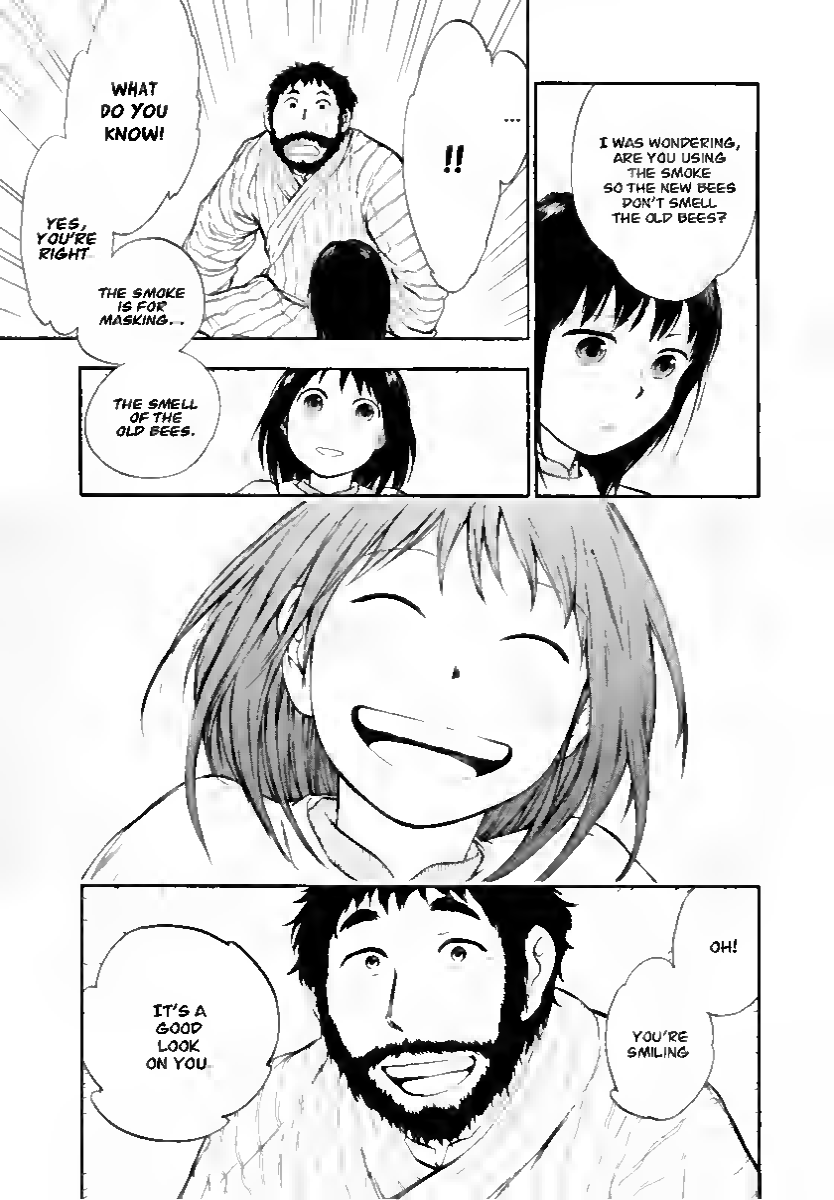
FSHH
FSHH
PASS ME THE SMOKER, PLEASE
THESE ARE HIVE FRAMES
HOME FOR MY BEES
YOU SPRAYED THE HIVE SO THE BEES WILL COME, RIGHT?
OH, I GET IT!
THEY'RE ATTRACTED TO THE SMELL OF FLOWERS
ISN'T IT?
...
WHAT A NICE SMELL!
LET'S HOPE THE BEES AGREE WITH US

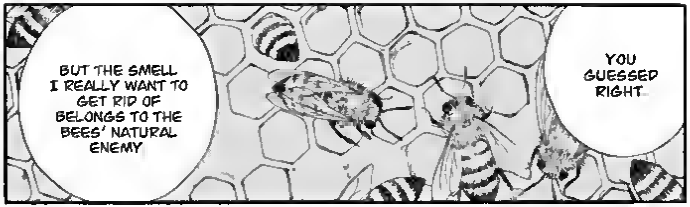
HMM
YOU SPEAK BEYOND YOUR YEARS.
EH?
I'M TEN
JUST HOW OLD...
ARE YOU?
...
THAT'S WHAT SAJU ONCE SAID TO ME.
Blush
YOU TALK LIKE A GROWN-UP ERIN
I'M SORRY TO TELL YOU, THOUGH—
YOU GOT IT WRONG.
FAR FROM IT. I'M IMPRESSED.
NOW, NOW. I'M NOT CALLING YOU AN IMPERTINENT LITTLE THING.

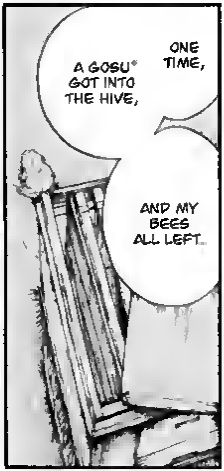
DO YOU KNOW WHY?
I HAVE ANOTHER REASON FOR SMOKING THE HIVE
THE SECRET TO MAKING THE BEES COME TO THIS HIVE IS SUGAR WATER,
WHICH I'LL SPRAY LATER
TO MAKE THE BEES DRUNK?
WHY WOULD HE NEED SOMETHING THAT SMELLS THIS STRONG?
NO,
OF COURSE YOU DON'T
FShh
FShh


ONLY THEN DID THEY PUT THE YOUNG ONE INTO THE POOL.
WHEN AN OLD TOHDA DIED, MOTHER AND THE HERDSMEN COVERED A YOUNG TOHDA WITH THE DEAD ONE'S MUCUS.
BEES' HOME...
STRONG SMELL...
Crap

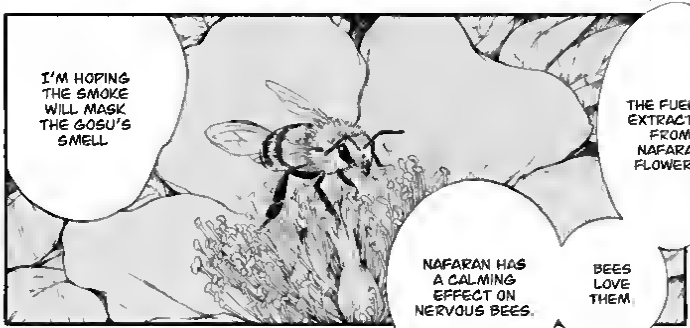
...
WHAT...
GAVE YOU THAT IDEA?
DID...
OTHER BEES LIVE IN THIS HIVE BEFORE?
UNCLE JOH-UN...
YES?


I WAS WONDERING, ARE YOU USING THE SMOKE SO THE NEW BEES DON'T SMELL THE OLD BEES?
...
!!
WHAT DO YOU KNOW!
YES, YOU'RE RIGHT
THE SMOKE IS FOR MASKING...
THE SMELL OF THE OLD BEES.
OH!
YOU'RE SMILING
IT'S A GOOD LOOK ON YOU

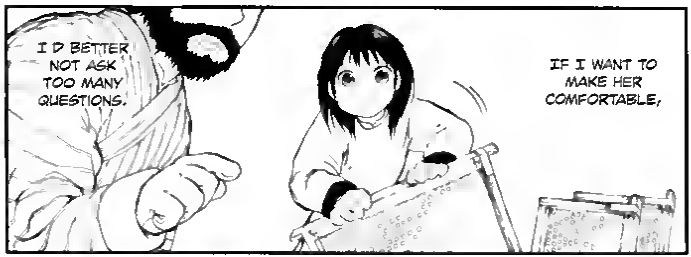





※ A small frog that exudes a strong smell


I'M HOPING THE SMOKE WILL MASK THE GOSU'S SMELL
THE FUEL IS EXTRACTED FROM NAFARAN FLOWERS.
NAFARAN HAS A CALMING EFFECT ON NERVOUS BEES.
BEES LOVE THEM.

shake
DOES YOUR FAMILY...
KEEP BEES, TOO?
I HAVE TO HAND IT TO YOU. YOU KNEW WHAT I WAS TRYING TO DO.
...
NOW LOOK WHAT YOU'VE DONE.
SHE WAS FINALLY SMILING AS BRIGHT AS THE SUN,
AND YOU HAD TO MAKE HER ALL GLOOMY AGAIN.
HER FAMILY IS A SORE SUBJECT, LIKE A FRESH WOUND.
I CAN'T HELP PRYING, THOUGH.
I'M BURNING TO KNOW.



※ Beekeeping information courtesy of Fujiwara Apiary in Iwate Prefecture

*To be continued in* Kemono no Souja *volume* 11

# Taking on a Challenge!

*Kemono no Souja* is fortunate to have a team of talented people breathe new life into it. The NHK animation has a legion of fans, who will—I hope—appreciate the differences depicted in this manga adaptation. And I'm sure fans of the novels will enjoy comparing the manga against the world they imagined from the text.

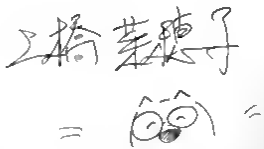
"What do I hope to achieve?" "How will I portray it?" To put it in plain words, these are issues an author has to tackle head-on. When adapting a novel into a manga, artists may deconstruct the original, make it their own, retell the story.

However, Takemoto-san did not shrink from the challenge that was my novel series. It was no small feat.

Personally, when I look into Erin's eyes on the cover, I see Takemoto-san's eyes. Takemoto-san is a bundle of spunk, so I'm pleased to see the same spirit reflected in Erin.

Here's hoping you will enjoy the ride and see where it takes you.

Uehashi Nahoko



When their favorite book is being adapted to a visual medium, like a manga or an animation, readers naturally have expectations and fears. That's because with novels each reader interprets the text differently.

As the person in charge of the manga adaptation of Kemono no Souja, I pull images from my head and put them to paper. But some days, my art doesn't live up to my own imagination, and I struggle. Being a fan of the novels myself puts a weight on my shoulders, but I've gotten used to it, I think? *shifty eyes*

Uehashi Nahoko has thanked me profusely. Yes, I did go into this challenge thing headlong, but I would love for you to stick it out with me.

## Thank you so much.

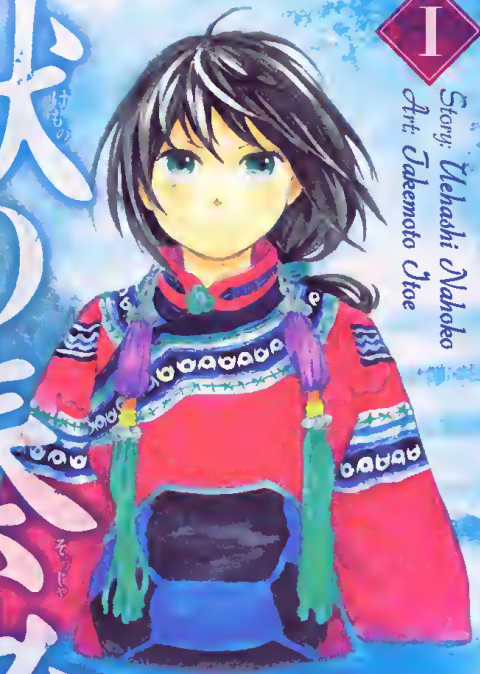
Uehashi Nahoko-sensei, my editors Nagaoka-sama and Sugiyama-sama, Fujiwara Apiary (for the interview), Eto-san, Oosuga-san, Katayori-san, Chizu-san, Matsuura-san, Moegi-san, Runa-san, my supportive friends, my parents, and the readers,

my thanks go to all of you!

Takemoto Itoe

# 獣の奏者

I



Story: Uehashi Nahoko
Art: Takemoto Itoe

# Kemono no Souja

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*From Uehashi Nahoko, the author renowned for the* ***Seirei no Moribito*** *series, comes this emotionally gripping epic fantasy, with art by Takemoto Itoe!*

# Kemono no Souja

## The Beast Player

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Art Takemoto Itoe

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